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BRIEFS

JEYPORE: The Rev. Moses Macho of the Jeypore Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC) in India is now undertaking a two-month study assignment in the Philippines and in Sabah, East Malaysia on evangelical work among the tribal peoples. Macho directs the JELC's Adivasi, which is part of the JELC evangelistic work in Koraput District where about 1.2 million tribal people live.

BANGKOK: A woman evangelist from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong is preparing to leave in April for her assignment as the first missionary to Thailand. Chan Wai-Ling said her preparation includes studying the Thai language and many things about Thailand.

BEIJING: Robert D. Fiala, professor of history at Concordia Teachers College, Seward, Nebraska, is teaching European civilization at the Normal College of Foreign Languages here during the 1987-88 academic year. Fiala, who has taught at Tunghai University in Taichung, Taiwan, is also studying Chinese history, language and culture and working on photographic projects while in China.

NANJING: The Amity Printing Press, which will give priority to printing Bibles and other religious publications in China, was officially opened on Dec. 5 in the outskirts of this capital city of Jiangsu. The press, run by the Chinese Amity Foundation and the Jiangning Industrial Corporation, is funded by the United Bible Societies.

HONG KONG: Outspoken Anglican clergyman, the Rev. Fung Chi-wood, has entered the race for a seat in the upcoming district board election which is considered to be a major influence in the make-up of the future legislature of the colony and the drafting of the Basic Law, a mini-constitution to be used after 1997 when China resumes sovereignty over Hong Kong. It is expected that more than 600 candidates will contest for 264 seats in the 19 boards. Fung, who has yet to get formal approval from his bishop, has been active in speaking against the Daya Bay nuclear power plant project and about other social/political issues.

KUALA LUMPUR: Glad Sounds/Christian Media Services, the audio-visual arm of the Lutheran Church of Malaysia and Singapore, has sent Yeong Sun-Keong, an audio-visual supervisor, to the U.S.A. for a three-month training at Ken Anderson Films, to assist in the production of a video curriculum called "Living the Life."

SINGAPORE: Two new members were elected by the Asian Lutheran Church Leaders' Conference to the editorial board of Asia Lutheran Press Services. The Rev. Harlen Simangunsong, general secretary of Huria Kristen Indonesia and Chandran Martin, editor of The Lutheran, an official magazine of the United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India, replaced Dr. Amudi Pasaribu and Dr. Kunchala Rajaratnam respectively. A woman member will also be included in the seven-member board. The board also includes a representative from the Lutheran Communications in Asia, the Rev. George Olson from Japan.

TAIPEI: The Rev. Chyu Tai-Kai, a former president (1979-82) of China Evangelical Lutheran Church, died here, Dec. 1, of a heart attack. He was 65.

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FUTURE OF CCA TO BE DECIDED AFTER DISSOLUTION

HONG KONG (alps) -- The Singapore government's action to dissolve the Singapore-based Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and expel its expatriate staff members led to speculations about the future of the ecumenical umbrella organization of 110 member councils and churches.

The CCA will call for a meeting of its General Committee to make a decision about its future, according to Mary Kay Hobbs, who works for the CCA's Hong Kong-based International Affairs office.

It was learned that the General Committee of the CCA has 23 members composed of four presidents, a treasurer, a general secretary and one representative from each of the 17 countries represented in the CCA. They were elected for a five-year term by the CCA Assembly in Seoul in 1985.

In Geneva, the Ecumenical Press Service reports that the CCA program committee met in Chiang Mai, Thailand last month as scheduled and the CCA general committee plans to hold an emergency meeting as soon as possible.

Also, the World Council of Churches (WCC) expressed its deep concern and pledged support for new arrangements for the continuation of the CCA. "The WCC reaffirms its support for the CCA, its policies, and directions. The CCA, with which the WCC has collaborated closely, has been through its various activities only fulfilling its mandate and functions as a regional ecumenical organization. The WCC upholds in its prayers all those related to the organization and especially the staff and their families immediately affected. The council pledges its support for efforts to make new arrangements for the CCA to continue its ministry effectively", the WCC stated.

"A lawyer has been hired to handle the situation," Hobbs said in a telephone interview. Five expatriate staff members of the CCA were preparing to leave Singapore after the Home Ministry of the Singapore government accused the ecumenical agency of getting involved in political activities (which was denied by the CCA), shut down the office on Dec. 30 and ordered them to leave the country in less than two weeks.

Hobbs said that the five expatriate workers -- from India, Japan, the Philippines, South Korea and Sri Lanka -- will most likely go directly back to their home countries under the expulsion order. They include CCA General Secretary Park Sang-Jung from South Korea and Associate General Secretary A. George Ninan from India. It was learned that other expatriate staff at the Singapore headquarters include Youth Secretary Nelun C. Gunasekera from Sri Lanka, Education Secretary Pura Calo from the Philippines and Development and Service Secretary Kenichi Otsu from Japan.

Despite a newspaper report that the CCA office was raided by police and immigration officers and the agency's funds were frozen, Hobbs claimed that her office operation here had not been affected by the incident at this point.

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In Tokyo, the official magazine of the National Christian Council in Japan, Japan Christian Activity News, urges readers, in its editorial, to support CCA staff and families and asked for financial contributions. It says, "We are in need of your prayers, and especially your financial contributions." NCCJ General Secretary Munetoshi Maejima said that the expulsion of the CCA was "unfortunate" and he pledged his "continued support" for the CCA and its ministries.

Shortly after the shut-down, CCA International Affairs Executive Secretary Clement John left his Hong Kong office for Singapore, according to a staff member, Helena Chan.

Another CCA office here is the Urban Rural Mission directed by the Rev. Kwon Ho-Kyung, a Presbyterian priest from South Korea. He said, "We want to leave Singapore, but as to how to leave, we don't know. We can't touch the material in the office which is guarded by the police." He refused to comment further on the situation without sufficient and new information.

Richard Worssam, an editor of Hong Kong Christian Council's quarterly, News and Views, said that the instant question for CCA is where to operate the office.

In the meantime, the monthly CCA News, which is criticized by the Singapore government as a tool to persuade readers to get involved in radical political activities, was apparently published with a new name, "Maccabeus," and was mailed from here. It said in an apology to readers that the reason for the delay of the October, November and December issues was that "the new editor has not been granted a publication permit" in Singapore.

The Home Ministry accused the CCA of using Singapore as a base to support "liberation movements" in other Asian countries and financially support communist activities. It also alleged that the CCA members, including some based in Hong Kong, had organized a campaign against the recent arrests of the alleged Marxist conspirators, including Roman Catholic church workers and social activists. The ministry said the government took action because the CCA "breached the undertaking it gave in 1974, when it applied to move its headquarters from Bangkok to Singapore and register as a society, not to indulge in any political activity or allow its funds to be used for political purposes."

Both Ninan and Stephen Webb, communication secretary of the CCA, denied the government accusations. Ninan told the press that the CCA activities never focused on a single country or its actions. He said, "We are an international body, not a local body." Webb said that the CCA had made "a conscious decision to steer clear" of issues surrounding the alleged Marxist conspiracy to avoid any problems with Singapore.

The CCA, composed of mainstream Protestant denominations, was founded 30 years ago by Asian churches "to express commitment to witness together in Asian context and to promote fellowship between the churches." It has organized regional training programs on such topics as theology, youth, women, mission and evangelism and development, has issued publications and documentations and is seeking closer relations with the Roman Catholic Church and evangelical Christians.

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ASIAN LUTHERANS MAP OUT NEW STRUCTURE FOR GLOBAL MISSION, SERVICES

SINGAPORE (alps) -- The Asian Lutheran church leaders have launched a plan to study further how a new regional structure will facilitate full participation of Asian churches in global mission and services.

Some 60 Lutheran church leaders from 13 Asian countries met here for a week-long (Nov. 24-Dec. 1) conference which was jointly organized by the Asia Desk in the Lutheran World Federation's (LWF) department of church cooperation (DCC) and the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Malaysia and Singapore, an umbrella organization consisting of three Lutheran churches in Malaysia and Singapore.

LWF General Secretary Gunnar Staalsett said in his keynote address that the concept of Holy Communion needs to be expressed in organizational form and he challenged the LWF's 104 member churches, including 33 in Asia, to "carry on the communion at home, and treat it the same as other challenges as mission and evangelism."

Highlighting his several reports to the recent LWF executive committee meetings and the joint commission meeting, the Norwegian theologian said the concept of Lutheran communion "is not advanced to concentrate more power in the LWF headquarters," but it "apportions equal right and duty to all member churches in a truly committed partnership."

In 1984 the LWF Seventh Assembly, in Budapest, Hungary, passed an amendment to its constitution which stipulates that LWF member churches "understand themselves to be in pulpit and altar fellowship with each other." Staalsett said the new insertion is basically a "self-understanding" by member churches and any church applying for LWF membership.

In response to the hesitancy to apply for LWF membership by non-LWF member churches in Asia, especially the Lutheran Church in Australia, whose members are divided in the church's relationship with the LWF and the US-based Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS), Staalsett said that the solution could be to promote further dialogue which has been started between the LWF and the theologically conservative LC-MS for a common understanding of the constitution.

At this meeting, which gathered mostly Asian Lutheran bishops and presidents, who represent some 4.4 million Lutherans, 10 different issues on the aspects of church unity, mission, peace, youth, women, theological education and communication were discussed.

LWF/DCC Asia Secretary Satoru Kishii called for global solidarity of Christian churches, in view of the existing diversity and pluralistic nature of the Christian churches in Asia. More than half of the world's population is in Asia, he said, but only 3.5 percent of them are Christians. Most Asian people are afflicted with different natural and human disasters, he said.

"Asia is probably the most typical region where urbanization is continuing rapidly," said Kishii. The Japanese theologian urged the

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church leaders to develop a joint strategy on urban mission in Asian context and to study the newly-released third draft of the 26-page LWF "Statement on Mission," which is available for comment, before Feb. 15, 1988.

The issue of maritime mission emerged as Dr. Roald Kverndal of the Seattle-based Lutheran Maritime Ministry Consultancy gave a paper on the topic, "Asia and the seafarer - a new era in mission to and through maritime migrants." Calling maritime mission the "frontier of mission," Kverndal said Asian Lutherans could serve as a "crucial catalyst" in the renewal of visions of mission to seafarers in the West.

On the sharing of resources, Dr. Kunchala Rajaratnam suggested that Asian churches' resources must be mobilized and shared with the world churches and a regional liaison body may serve that purpose.

Rajaratnam, the former LWF/DCC Asia secretary and present executive secretary of the LWF national committee in India, the United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India (UELICI), urged in a rather critically-worded report that more Asian representatives should be included in the staff and structure of the LWF. He also hoped that a regional liaison body could "ensure sharing and communication within the context of the LWF fellowship."

Chinatsu Takahashi, a vice-president of Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, reported about the peacemaking initiative taken by Japanese Lutherans. She said, "This is truly the time for us Christians to keep the candles burning brightly for peace everywhere on earth," referring to the present global arms race issues and the recommendations drawn out of a church-organized international peace seminar held in Hiroshima earlier last year.

The Palestinian human rights issue was brought up as a concern for peace and justice in the Middle East by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the LWF, which will send a delegation to the Middle East soon to study the situation.

Though altogether only some 10 youth and women delegates and observers were present at the conference, they categorically stressed their concerns as parts of church and society. The Rev. Albert Tokave of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea said in his report that youth should not be regarded as a separate identity within the church and social structure. "The challenging mission of our church today in Asia is to lead youth and others out of all forms of captivity in our society," he said, referring to the same challenges facing all members of church and society.

Prasanna K. Samuel of UELICI called upon the church leaders to take "bold steps" to involve more women in all levels of decision-making processes and to help develop their potentials through training and studies.

Toward the end of the conference, nine areas of concern were discussed by three small groups. The final recommendations included the formation of a follow-up committee consisting of LWF Asian executive committee members to develop a regional structure to strengthen the participation of Asian church members in the LWF on the basis of the

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concept of Holy Communion, full participation and regionalization and to explore the possibility of holding an Asian Church Leaders' Conference (ACLC) on restructuring issues later this year. The participants also affirmed the importance of integrating peace and justice issues in church discussions and conferences and encouraged churches to actively participate in struggles for peace and justice.

They urged churches to intensify the promotion of women's participation in church work through leadership training, Bible studies and education, to start studying and planning urban mission and to share information about mission to seafarers. They referred the final statement issued by the Asian Lutheran Youth Gathering in Jerusalem last August, to national churches for study and response, agreed to continue the Asian Program for the Advancement of Training and Studies (APATS) with the present structure until the next ACLC and elected new members to the board of Asia Lutheran Press Services.

-- By David Lin --

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HK SYNOD TAKES NO FURTHER ACTION ON LWF MEMBERSHIP DECISION

HONG KONG (alps) -- The Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod (LC-HKS) will take no further action for the time being, on its decision to withdraw from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), due to a change in the LWF constitution, according to LC-HKS President Titus Lee.

The reason is partly due to LWF General Secretary Gunnar Staalsett's extended welcome to the synod to retain its LWF membership, Lee told ALPS last month. "And it is partly because the synod's partner church, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, has begun talks with the LWF on the theological issue," said Lee, who heads the 6,580-member church.

Despite the synod's recent consideration to withdraw from the 104-member international organization due to a change in the LWF constitution, the LC-HKS was asked to retain its membership in the LWF. Lee said he has received a letter from Staalsett who confirmed the wish of the LWF.

In a recent letter to Staalsett, the synod's executive council, the highest decision-making body of the church, expressed their concern about the LWF constitution which includes a clause stipulating that LWF member churches "understand themselves to be in pulpit and altar fellowship." The LWF included this clause at its Seventh Assembly in Budapest, Hungary in 1984.

The synod's letter was handed to Staalsett by Lee during the Asian Lutheran Leaders' Conference (Nov. 24-Dec. 1) in Singapore. Both held a brief talk in which the letter was discussed.

Lee insisted that, being related to the LC-MS, Hong Kong synod officials felt "pressure" from the LC-MS to break the link with the LWF, especially after the change in the constitution. But Staalsett said that as far as he was concerned, and after recent meetings with officials from the LC-MS, including its president, Ralph Bohlmann, there was no sign of pressure exerted from the theologically-conservative

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church to its partner churches. "Maybe it's just high-level church politics," he suggested.

The LC-HKS joined the LWF in 1979. Lutheran churches related to the LC-MS from South Korea, Japan, the Philippines and Papua New Guinea are also members of the LWF. Staalsett said the new insertion is basically a "self-understanding" by member churches and is a theological issue, but he added that each church should make its own decision in considering membership in international organizations like the LWF. He also said that the LWF has an executive committee member from the Lutheran Church in the Philippines, who is related to LC-MS.

Staalsett also told the Hong Kong church leader that a formal meeting with representatives from the LC-MS and LWF officials would be held a week later to discuss the issue further for a common understanding of the constitution. Even with this concern, Staalsett said, "the LWF is happy to have the Hong Kong Synod as our member and hope it will remain a member as before."

Earlier in the meeting, Lee, with the help of a translator, admitted that there was a false assumption due to a language problem that the Asian Lutheran Leaders' Conference would discuss whether to pass the new insertion of the constitution. At press time LC-MS Asia Secretary Louis Nau was not available for comment on Lee's allegation.

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AUSTRALIAN LUTHERANS NO CHANGE IN LINK WITH LWF

ADELAIDE, Australia (alps) -- The Lutheran Church in Australia (LCA) will not seek membership in the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) at this time, but will continue to maintain its previous relationship and cooperation with the world body.

This decision was made at the recent church convention on the recommendation of the General Church Council, and in light of an official LWF interpretation of constitutional changes made at the 1984 LWF assembly in Budapest, Hungary. These changes require that any church joining the LWF understands itself to be in pulpit and altar fellowship with all other LWF member churches.

The LCA's commission on theology will, however, continue to study the implications of the changes to the LWF constitution. At the same time, the LCA will seek to further develop fellowship discussions with Lutheran churches in the United States, particularly the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and has asked the newly-elected president, Lance Steicke, to initiate communications with the newly formed Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. (The Lutheran)

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SURVEY SHOWS LUTHERANS INCREASE IN ASIA

GENEVA (alps) -- The number of Lutherans worldwide increased slightly last year with gains in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe.

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The number of Lutherans in Asia and the Pacific is 5,749,826, of which 4,625,286 belong to Lutheran World Federation member churches.

According to a global survey released early this month by the Lutheran World Federation Information Bureau, the number of Lutherans worldwide is now 59,745,877. Asian countries that have more than half a million Lutherans include Indonesia (2,775,848), India (1,097,903) and Papua New Guinea (645,000).

Asian Lutheran churches with more than half a million members include Protestant Christian Batak Church in Indonesia (2,000,000) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea (550,000).

Last year the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church in India reported a membership increase of 14.3 percent, from 350,000 to 400,000. The survey is based on figures provided by church bodies, which may have discrepancies in the ways they count their membership.

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LWF, NON-FEDERATION LUTHERANS SEEK COMMUNICATION FOR SELF-
UNDERSTANDING, VISION

GENEVA (alps) -- A forum for conversation between representatives of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and non-LWF church leaders was held here, Dec. 7-8.

Dr. Ralph A. Bohlmann, president of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and Dr. Roger Nostbakken, president of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon, Canada, and a member of the LWF executive committee, served as co-chairpersons.

LWF General Secretary Gunnar Staalsett, who in 1986 had proposed that such discussions be held, welcomed the group to the LWF headquarters. He stated that the purpose of the forum was to facilitate communications on issues of importance for the self-understanding and vision of Lutheran churches in today's world. Two main papers were presented and discussed.

In a paper entitled "Toward a Lutheran Communion," Dr. Eugene Brand, associate director and secretary for interconfessional dialogue and ecclesiological research in the LWF department of studies, traced the historical development of the theological self-understanding of the LWF from the time of its inception in 1947 to the present. Bohlmann delivered a paper on "Inter-Christian relationships: Missouri and her partners" in which he presented basic biblical principles and their theological implications for the practice of altar-and-pulpit fellowship.

During subsequent discussion, considerable attention was given to the implications of action taken by the federation in 1984 to amend its constitution to read: "The member churches of the LWF understand themselves to be in pulpit-and-altar fellowship with each other."

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LWF representatives pointed to an official interpretation given to this amendment by the LWF executive committee last July: "In accepting the Constitution of the LWF (III.1) any church applying for membership understands itself to be in pulpit-and-alter fellowship with all member churches."

Meeting in the season of Advent, the consultation was especially sensitive to the joint commitment of all Lutherans to global mission and evangelism. Issues that emerged for further attention included:

- How can Lutherans together confess the gospel of justification by grace through faith today?
- How can LWF and non-LWF churches assist one another in this task of evangelization?
- How is the basis for pulpit-and-alter fellowship to be understood?
- Are there ways other than full membership for Lutheran churches to relate to the LWF and its work?
- Are there key terms and issues which Lutheran churches should explore further such as the relationship between the gospel and doctrine? The second meeting of the forum was held from Dec. 12-14 in St. Louis, U.S.A. (LWI)

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BURMESE LUTHERANS CELEBRATE 110th ANNIVERSARY, ORDAIN FIRST PASTOR IN 20 YEARS

SINGAPORE (alps) -- The Lutheran Bethlehem Church, the only Lutheran church in Burma, celebrated their 110th anniversary recently and ordained the first pastor in 20 years.

Extra space in the courtyard of the church was arranged for a "good celebration," said Dr. Thomas Batong, president of the Lutheran Church in the Philippines, who was among a number of overseas guests from such countries as Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Sweden at the ceremony. The Tamil-speaking Burmese Lutheran church has only one congregation, with about 715 members, situated in the capital city of Rangoon. There are some challenges, said Batong, who, like all overseas visitors, was given only a seven-day tourist visa. One of them concerns how this church is to become a church in Burma as it was built on its roots with the Tamil-speaking Indian background.

Another challenge is the restriction of Burmese citizens to travel abroad. This hinders the Burmese Lutherans' participation and contact with their counterparts within the Asian region, said Batong, who shared with the participants at the recent Asian Lutheran Leaders' Conference here.

Batong said a pastor is allowed to travel abroad only once a year, but if he has used up this year's allotment, it means he can not travel until the next year. Another difficulty is the lack of theological books. The newly-ordained pastor, Jensen Andrews, is the son of the present pastor, Joseph John Andrews. He completed his theological studies basically from private tutorials given by overseas theologians who go to Burma occasionally and completed a lot of home assignments which were the primary sources for evaluation.

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Due to the Burmese government restrictions for missionary or mission-related people to enter Burma, Batong said that these theologians, most of whom are from the neighboring Asian Lutheran churches, including Hong Kong and South Korea, had no option but to go on tourist visas. Despite all these challenges facing the Burmese church, Batong said a native Burmese is expected to complete his theological studies this year and he may be sent by the church to serve the Karen-speaking tribal people in northern Burma.

At the ordination service, Batong gave the sermon. Participants included the Anglican bishop and the Roman Catholic church representatives.

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INDONESIAN LUTHERANS STUDY URBAN MISSION POSSIBILITIES

JAKARTA, Indonesia (alps) -- The Lutheran churches in Indonesia are geared up to start planning some urban mission programs and suggested that a cooperative body may serve that purpose.

The Indonesian Lutheran churches, with more than 2.7 million members who live mostly in North Sumatra, have found that many of their people are migrating to Jakarta for economic and employment reasons, according to a statement released after the five-day (Nov. 16-20) consultation on urban mission. The consultation was organized by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) department of church cooperation and the Lutheran churches in Indonesia.

The statement says that "the new patterns of life which are molded by industrialization as well as (by) the use of science and technology in their daily life" tend to uproot the members from "their culture and witness as faithful Christians." This has posed challenges to the Lutheran churches who felt the need to "evaluate their strategies and patterns of ministry."

Identifying the current problems in urban mission, the churches considered that they are "not yet well prepared to serve the urban society." The unreadiness was attributed to the prevalence of traditional, conservative thinking, the lack of knowledge on social problems, the lack of church personnel, inadequate communication among churches and impractical theological education.

The churches in their recommendations suggested that a cooperative body in urban mission be formed by the LWF member churches in Indonesia, the churches prepare seafarers ministry programs in Indonesian port cities, a training center be established for related mission workers and research work be conducted on a priority scale ranging from low-income workers to drug addicts.

They also recommended that each church should have urban mission programs by 1988 and more meetings among church leaders should be held.

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HK LUTHERANS LAUNCH MAGAZINE ON NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

HONG KONG (alps) -- An English quarterly magazine, "Areopagus," was published by the Tao Fong Shan Christian Center (TFSCC) here, a study institute related to the Scandinavian Lutheran group called Christian Mission to the Buddhists.

Using the name of an old Greek city in which St. Paul had preached, the magazine is an extension of "Update," the academic journal on new religious movements formerly published by the Dialogue Center International of Aarhus, Denmark, according to "Areopagus" Editor Brant Pelphrey, an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America missionary in Hong Kong.

The first issue deals mainly with many aspects of Christian encounters with other faiths and cults such as Hinduism, Buddhism, the Unification Church and the Children of God. Pelphrey said the magazine maintains some 14 correspondents who are stationed in different Asian cities.

The Rev. Ernst Harbakk, superintendent of the TFSCC and a member of the Norwegian Missionary Society, said that "Areopagus" is part of the publishing work of TFSCC, which promotes dialogue and sharing of information about other faiths. (For more information, write to TFSCC, PO Box 33, Shatin, New Territories, Hong Kong.)

AUGSBURG CONFESSION IN THAI LANGUAGE PUBLISHED BY LUTHERAN MISSION

BANGKOK, Thailand (alps) -- The first Thai edition of the Augsburg Confession was published here by the Lutheran Mission in Thailand (LMT). Translated by Pongsak Limthongvirutn, a Chinese Thai evangelist, the new Augsburg Confession in Thai language is used by the 190-member LMT, a joint mission venture of church groups in Hong Kong, Norway and Finland. According to LMT President Christopher Woie, 1,000 copies of the new book were printed. Some copies were sent to local Bible schools and theological institutions. Some are also available for sale. Interested persons may contact LMT at PO Box 11-1173, Bangkok 10112, Thailand, for more information about the new Augsburg Confession and the Small and Large Catechism in the Thai language.

CHINESE LUTHERAN WOMEN DISCUSS FEMINIST THEOLOGY, DEMAND ORDINATION

HONG KONG (alps) -- An Anglican theologian called upon Chinese Christian women to re-assess both their cultural heritage and Christian faith as a starting point to search for new sources for developing a theology of women, and a Lutheran woman pastor said it is

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only a "matter of time" for the Lutheran churches in Asia to ordain women.

Kwok Pui-Lan, a theology lecturer at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, urged some 50 participants, mostly Lutheran women from Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong at a seminar here (Nov. 9-13), to "weave new patterns that will liberate ourselves and sustain our faith."

The seminar on Asian Chinese feminist theology was jointly organized by the women's desk in the Lutheran World Federation's department of studies and the Lutheran Theological Seminary (LTS) in Hong Kong.

Kwok suggested that feminist theology is "developed from women's experience." She said that the criterion of having a "Chinese" feminist theology "depends on how much we identify our cultural roots as Chinese and the struggle of Chinese people."

She reminded the participants of the Chinese Christian women's participation in social reforms such as the anti-foot-binding movement, literacy campaigns and health programs in China in the late 19th century.

She considered that the "first wave of feminist thought" had emerged in 1922 in China when Ruth Cheng raised the issue of women ordination in a magazine.

But she noted that the history of Christianity in China, which was written from the missionary's perspective, often emphasized "the work 'done for' Chinese women, instead of telling the stories and lives of the women themselves." She thought these stories should be recovered for the benefit of women's struggles for justice in the church and society today.

She urged the Chinese church women, who have received better education than before, to "endow each other with our vision" to search for a theology which "tries to bear witness to the unceasing yearning of human beings for freedom and justice and articulates the human compassion for peace and reconciliation."

She also suggested that Chinese Christian women should take into account their cultural and sexual identity when interpreting the Bible. "We, as Christian Chinese women, should interpret the Bible from the Chinese perspective and be suspicious of the 'century-old male-centered interpretations,'" Kwok said. "If we do not want the Bible to be used to legitimate the subordination of women, we must re-interpret it in a new way from the woman's perspective."

The Rev. Pang Ken-Phin, who is the first woman pastor of the Basel Christian Church of Malaysia (BCCM), said churches today have four different attitudes toward the ordination of women -- acceptance, partial acceptance, rejection after discussion and indifference.

"Even though the ordination of women is not popular in Chinese-speaking churches, eventually, it will be accepted by churches. It's only a matter of time," said Pang, who was ordained last year by BCCM, the first Chinese-speaking Lutheran church in Asia to ordain women.

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But she added that the major difficulty for women to be ordained in Chinese-speaking churches comes from the profound traditional culture which has been discriminating against women. "Generally speaking, churches in Asia have inherited the male-centered concept and have forgotten that both women and men are children of God," Pang said.

It took seven years after the 18,500-member BCCM had accepted women evangelists to ordain women, she said.

She urged that women and men should accept and respect each other and work as good partners in church and society. "The concept of partnership between women and men should be introduced in the Bible school curriculum and family fellowship in order to enhance the spirit of mutual cooperation," she said.

In her Bible study, Presbyterian theologian the Rev. Carol Chow Adams of South Korea gave her views toward women in relation to creation and to the Fall. Using Genesis 1-3, she said, "There is no place for submission of one sex to the other or domination of one over the other. Responsibilities and tasks, joy and delight -- all are to be shared."

The Rev. Thor Strandenaes of the Norwegian Missionary Society compared the views of women by Jesus and Paul in his Bible study. He concluded that both Paul and Jesus showed concern for protecting women from bondages and calamities and shared the same view that women and men are "of equal value in the kingdom of God."

On traditional culture and women, Winnie Ho of LTS hoped that women could develop their talents on the basis of equality between men and women in the church. Ng Shiu-Hing of the Chinese University Counseling Center said the traditional Chinese attitude toward women has been gradually changing as women are more economically independent than before in some Asian countries like Hong Kong and Singapore.

Toward the end of the seminar, the participants recommended that there be a standard (Chinese) title for men and women evangelists and that churches should ordain women. They also called for equal salaries for both sexes in the church, more leadership training for women and the involvement of women in all levels of decision-making process. They expressed their desire to have information exchange among women in Asia and a similar seminar every two years within the region.

-- By David Lin --

#####

BASEL YOUTH URGED TO HELP POOR

KOTA KINABALU, Malaysia (alps) -- About 400 young people from five districts of the Basel Christian Church in Malaysia (BCCM) attended a four-day biennial national youth rally here recently.

BCCM Bishop Thu En-Yu, in his opening address, called upon the young people to bear the vision of wisdom and to act to break through "the thick wall of over-conservative traditions" which often hinder the growth of ministry. "Go to preach the gospel to the poor

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people and help them," Thu said. He encouraged the young people to grow in spiritual life and discipline themselves by studying the Bible and "not be shaken by heresies."

The rally featured lectures on the theme, "Go to all nations," and on various subjects such as heresies, spiritual movements, marriage, church music and career development. (from BCCM News)

#####

U.S. LUTHERAN MEDICAL TEAM HELPS DISABLED CHILDREN IN CHINA

CHICAGO (alps) -- Recently in Nanjing, China, helping the lame to walk has been the target service of a vibrant church in China which is alive and growing and is increasingly open also to a partnership in ministry with Western Christians.

The Board of Directors of the Chicago-based Lutheran social service agency, Wheat Ridge Foundation (WRF), heard the story of this partnership in ministry and the blossoming of the Chinese church in their recent meeting -- as a three-member medical team, funded by WRF, reported on its five-week stint in Nanjing, training staff for a rehabilitation center for disabled children.

Team members -- Dr. Marcy Ditmanson, orthopedic surgeon from Minneapolis; Kay Dole, occupational therapist from the University of Minnesota hospitals; and Deborah Wickham, physical therapist from Pana, Illinois -- presented lectures and conducted hands-on labs for 40 Chinese students. Class members included doctors, nurses and paramedical personnel from the center and other medical professionals from the surrounding provinces who are interested in working with the disabled.

The U.S. team lectured on normal development and diagnosis of developmental disabilities, and demonstrated current treatment techniques. Overhead transparencies, slides and interpreters helped overcome the language barrier.

Parents of children being treated were sometimes present -- to familiarize themselves with exercises that they could then use with their children at home, to gain mobility.

Ditmanson, the team leader, reported that their training project "was followed with great interest by the Chinese social affairs bureau -- since the Nanjing center is the first children's rehabilitation center in China."

The center is located in a new seven-story building on the grounds of the Nanjing Children's Welfare Institute. Growing out of a church-run orphanage, the Nanjing institution has taken in some 10,000 orphaned or abandoned children during the past 30 some years, 7,000 of whom has been subsequently adopted by childless families.

In recent years, the children left in the institution's care are primarily the physically and/or mentally handicapped.

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The Nanjing children's center serves 100 children in residence and provides consultation and rehabilitation treatment to another 200 disabled children daily, on an outpatient basis. Local authorities estimate that there are over 10,000 physically and mentally disabled children in the Nanjing area alone.

While the Wheat Ridge medical team generally found pediatric rehabilitation in the beginning stages in China, they also found it fascinating to observe firsthand two treatment techniques employed by the Chinese that have not been widely utilized in the U.S.: acupuncture and laser treatments for burns.

A highlight of their stay in Nanjing included getting to know the doctors and nurses on the center staff. Particularly memorable also was a program performed shortly before they left where young retarded and physically disabled children from the center not only walked, but danced and leaped for joy.

Team members had an opportunity to visit the seminary in Nanjing, the largest of 12 seminaries now open in China, and worshiped every Sunday in one of the local churches.

Ditmanson told about the Sunday they visited St. Paul's Church, which had been used as a Red Guards headquarters during the Cultural Revolution and just reopened two-and-a-half years ago.

"The building was filled with 700 worshipers in the main auditorium and others gathered outside, listening to the service through the windows. It was such a great thrill to see the blossoming of the church in China."

A special part of that thrill for Ditmanson and his wife Joyce, who accompanied the team, is that they both grew up in China, of missionary parents, and had themselves served as American Lutheran Church medical missionaries in Taiwan and Bangladesh for 25 years. The two had met and fallen in love in China during World War II, in a Japanese internment camp called Shantung Compound.

Joyce returned to Australia with her parents after the war, while Marcy stayed in China for three more years -- studying at Yenching University and serving as a medical supply officer in North China with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. They were married in Australia in 1948, and then came to the United States for Marcy's pre-med and medical training.

An emotional high for Joyce was a quick side visit she and Marcy made to Beijing, the city where she had grown up. Marcy particularly enjoyed visiting the first mission hospital in Nanjing, which is now one of the largest and best referral hospitals in China, although no longer under church control.

Shortly before they left China, the Ditmansons were also witnesses to a major historical event: they watched as the first Chinese Bibles came off modern new printing presses in Nanjing. The Bible printing is a project of the Amity Foundation, funded by the United Bible Societies.

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The Wheat Ridge medical training project was also administered by the Amity Foundation in China, the agency established by the Chinese Christians in 1985 to coordinate overseas assistance.

Under the Amity Foundation's ground rules, Marcy said, Westerners involved in partnership projects in China "were not to be actively evangelizing there," but to let the church continue with its own evangelism efforts.

"What we could do, however," Marcy indicated, "was to demonstrate with our spirit and attitude what it means to be a Christian."

And that in itself provided opportunities for witnessing, Marcy said -- citing the example of an engineering student whom they met in their dining hall, who was interested in learning about Christianity and asked Marcy to tell him more about "who Jesus was."

Marcy concluded with this summary of the trip: "The work we did in China, with staff and patients at the center, we did with a low profile. But we did it in the name of Christ, and it was very well received."

All expressed a desire to go back to China, with the hope that any future team "could have more actual patient contact." (Wheat Ridge Foundation)

#####

FEATURE: ORISSA VILLAGERS LAUNCH FORESTRY SCHEME

CALCUTTA, India (alps) -- "Saya chetan kuri
Lipir lipir sari
Hayate Hila kan hipir hipir
Rath nakich bagiben
Gech gurich chetben
Bangben sahao heda hiram sikir"
(a Santali folk song)

"We shall eat, drink and make ourselves merry.
This body, this lump of earth will not stay on.
Life slides along like water on an arum leaf.
This body, this lump of earth, will not stay on."

In the soft silvery light of the moon, Pasma village in Jamda Block of Project WHAT (Water, Health, Agriculture, Trident) in Orissa looked like a wonderland. The undulating plains surrounding the village shimmered in the silvery night. The dancers in village square assembled for a night of fun and merrymaking, the roll of drums and vibrant tribal music cast a magic spell over the area. The words of the song appropriately reflected the carefree spirit of the community.

The rising sun broke the spell. The drums gradually fell silent. The dancers and the merrymakers dispersed to face yet another hard day in their tenuous existence. The bright glare of the October sun revealed the harsh realities of existence in Pasma.

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The village is surrounded by small hillocks with sparse patches of greenery in places. The horizon remains treeless and the landscape eerie and barren. All around lay an ominous wasteland. This region has been chronically prone to drought due to geological and climatic conditions. The rocky soil and the erratic rainfall have created chronic water scarcity in the region. The absence of protective vegetation has accelerated the process of top soil erosion during the rains, further degrading the lands. The only redeeming feature is the number of water sheds served by the existing drainage system in the Jamda Block.

The Pasma village is inhabited by 110 families of which 90 families are tribal people while the rest are non-tribals. Their main occupation is agriculture.

Project WHAT in working with these deprived communities explored the possibilities of bringing the vast stretches of unutilized barren land into use. An idea for a social forestry scheme germinated among the community after many meetings, group discussions and interpersonal dialogues between the community and project personnel. The process was spread over several months.

Yes, the community understood the need for planting trees. Certainly they accepted the importance of trees. Yet, the managerial and operational aspects of the community-oriented scheme confused them. Young Damu Marandi, the nonformal education teacher of the village and a member of the village committee, came forward to take up the challenge. His leadership encouraged eight families with marginal land holdings to form a group.

The group among them had 7.75 acres (3.1 hectares) of barren land. What kind of trees to plant and how best to obtain the seedlings became the next point of discussion. Many ideas were considered. Initially the group decided to plant "Babui grass," used locally for rope making. Since Babui seeds were not locally available, the scheme was given up. The group then offered suggestions such as "Eucaliptus," useful as fire wood and for building houses as well as medical purposes, "Subabul," also useful for fuel and fodder, "Arjun" and "Krishnachura," trees useful locally and "White-Sirish," generally used for furniture. These trees were identified as best suitable for the local soil conditions.

Once suitable trees were identified, the group's attention turned to means for obtaining the seedlings. Seedlings were available but had to be procured from a great distance. The cost involved, the considerable distance and consequent transport problems were overwhelming. Group discussions, brainstorming sessions and intense consultations with Lutheran World Service (LWS) personnel followed. Why not start a nursery to raise seedlings right in the village? The idea appeared awesome, yet was appealing. LWS could provide the technical guidance and some of the material input. The village revolving fund could also be tapped for more financial requirements. Thus, the group started working on its own nursery scheme for forestry.

The seeds were procured from the government's Forest Department with the help of LWS. A small plot of land was identified to raise seedlings. In the meantime, the group dug trenches all around the

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plot to protect the plants from stray cattle. The men in the group were engaged in the hard work like digging the trenches, while the women did the lighter work like planting and watering the young seedlings.

The group hired a person at a monthly remuneration of Rs. 60 (US\$5) to look after the land during the day and to ensure that playful village children and stray cattle did not damage these young plants.

The group's request for a loan from the village revolving fund was received favorably. Impressed by the group's enthusiasm, the village committee sanctioned them a loan of Rs. 2,400 (\$200) which was to be repaid with an interest of 5 percent.

The group then approached LWS for support in the scheme. Apart from giving technical expertise and guidance all along, LWS gave the group organic manure, seeds, watering cans, net and polythene bags worth Rs. 3,373 (\$280).

The group worked on the project for six months starting in January last year. By the end of June the group had raised thousands of seedlings of different varieties. The neighboring village communities were observing with avid interest the progress made by the group. The success of the group inspired them. They too wanted to join in the social forestry scheme.

After planting on their own land, the group could spare approximately 34,000 seedlings. Three village communities approached LWS for assistance to purchase these seedlings. Damu Marandi's group sold the seedlings to these communities at a reasonable price. Thus, the hard work put in by the group fetched them a total sum of Rs. 13,600 (\$1,130). The loan borrowed from the village revolving fund was promptly repaid with interest. The value of material assistance received from LWS was also donated to the community fund, further enriching and strengthening the community fund. At the end of the transaction, the group had made a profit of Rs. 7,347 (\$612), much more than what they would have earned from their normal pursuits.

Today, the group's own plantation, over 7.75 acres (3.1 hectares), is thriving under their watchful and tender care. Trees planted by the other communities are also flourishing. Damu Marandi and his group have made more ambitious plans for themselves. They are already busy preparing ground for the next round of raising seedlings. There are many more communities keenly interested in undertaking tree plantation. The village nursery run by Damu and his group has proved the most profitable for all concerned.

A new sense of accomplishment can be seen on the faces of Damu Marandi and his group. One green step in the barren landscape through the cooperation of LWS and Marandi's group was just the beginning of several such strides to follow. (from LWS)

#####

CLARIFICATION: In our 04/87 issue the story titled "Palestinian Church Forms New Congregation in Amman," the Church of Sweden Mission and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission are the major funding agencies for the construction of the new church, not just the "churches

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in Germany" as originally reported based on the information provided by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan Bishop Naim Nassar.

#####

FEATURE: PNG CHURCH EQUIPS PEOPLE TO FACE GROWING SECULARISM

By Getake S. Gam

(Gam is bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea. The following article is an excerpt of Gam's report at the Asian Lutheran Church Leaders' Conference.)

SINGAPORE (alps) -- Papua New Guinea is a fast-growing country, the rapid changes in all walks of life have created a dilemma in the smooth running of the nation and also the Christian life and faith of the church. In-fighting (tribal) among Christian churches, for example, is one of the major problems facing Papua New Guinea and her people. However, ecumenism between major church denominations has been emphasized and certain combined projects have been successfully organized by the major churches. For example, a chapel is being constructed at the University of Papua New Guinea in Port Moresby, and a religious education program is being launched at Goroka Teachers' College and at one of our other urban centers.

As far as we are concerned, there could be more co-operation between the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches in Asia. For instance, we have decided to financially assist the Mentawai (Lutheran) Church in Indonesia in purchasing a boat and to begin a personnel exchange program with the Lutheran Church in the Philippines which will sponsor a nurse to come to Papua New Guinea to teach in one of our Lutheran schools of nursing. We would like to see more exchanges like these among the Asian churches. This could be achieved if we leaders would take the initiative and encourage our own churches to get involved in such programs.

Lay evangelism and ministry has played a major role in the ministry of the church in the past and has continued until now. We have set up lay evangelist training centers for the training of evangelists and at present we have thousands serving humbly and faithfully. Pastoral training in the seminaries is also one of our priorities in our program. Many pastors graduate every year from our three seminaries. They are sent out to perform various types of ministries in our church. We have about 655 ordained pastors actively serving in our church today. Equipping our pastors and other church workers with the Word of God is a must at this particular time when secularism is effectively gaining strength among many of our people.

The unfinished work of the building of God's temple has been taken into account since our centenary celebrations in 1986. Encouragement has been given for the whole ministry of the church, for the proclamation of the Good News of salvation in Christ, for our Christian education programs, medical work, social concerns, youth ministry, women's work, chaplaincy work, for pastoral care and spiritual nourishment and for other developmental ministries.

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BRIEFS:

TOKYO: Both Christian and non-Christian religious broadcasters in Japan are struggling over similar problems, according to Takashi Yuguchi of Japan Lutheran Hour. They strive to find the best way to reach secular people. At the same time they are facing public prejudices, financial limitations and "potential friction with both their church bureaucracies and broadcasting stations." Yuguchi recently investigated religious broadcasting in Japan as part of his research program at Sophia University.

TAIPEI: Final plans for an English language study program for Chinese students were drawn up recently for The International Academic Exchange Center, an education project launched by the China Lutheran Hour (CLH). The program will use English television programs such as "Three's Company," "Bill Cosby Show" and news commentaries by American anchorwoman, Barbara Walters, to help students improve their English comprehension, according to CLH Manager Henry Go Wu.

CHANGSHA: The Chicago-based Wheat Ridge Foundation sponsored a team of medical specialists to train staff of a rehabilitation center for disabled children in this Hunan city late last year. The team included orthopedic surgeon Marcy Ditmanson and his wife Joyce, Suzanne Wiebusch, a registered physical therapist and Pat Schiltgen, an occupational therapist. This was the team's second visit to China upon the request of the Amity Foundation of China. In 1987 the team went to Nanjing.

KUALA LUMPUR: Regina Samuel, 47, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Malaysia and Singapore, has replaced Vanita Nallathambi of India, as Asia secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department of World Service Community Development Service. Before joining the LWF, Samuel worked in the Malaysia Ministry of Education as an examination specialist.... Highlighting the three-day (Oct. 28-30) church music seminar organized by the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Malaysia and Singapore was the presentation by a 100-member choir at the Reformation Day service here. The seminar studied topics such as music and worship, liturgical music and the meaning of Christian singing. Earlier, the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore celebrated its 25th anniversary.

HONG KONG: Taosheng Publishing House (TPH), the publishing arm of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong, celebrated its 75th anniversary at the thanksgiving service here, Oct. 30. An exhibition of the past and present work of TPH showed the first issue of the Lutheran News, which was published in Chinese in 1913 by the former body of TPH, the Lutheran Board of Publication, in Hankow, China. The editor was Norwegian missionary, Karl Reichelt.

PEMATANG SIANTAR: The 214,400-member Gereja Kristen Protestan Indonesia (GKPI) or Christian Protestant Church in Indonesia has elected the Rev. R.M.G. Marbun, 53, as new bishop and the Rev. Oberlin Siahaan, 52, the former church magazine editor and secretary of public affairs, its new general secretary.

#####

X-DAY, WHEN THE JAPANESE EMPEROR DIES, WORRIES CHURCHES

TOKYO (alps) -- Japanese church watchers have started to worry about the overall effect of the emperor's death on the Christian church here. It is now commonly known as the effect of "X-day".

X-day refers to the day when the ailing emperor, Hirohito, died last month. Japanese Christians are worried that his death could revive ultra-nationalist sentiment and a return to traditional concepts of Japanese identity. This could cause the Japanese to revert to a formerly held position of regarding Christianity as a "foreign religion."

This return to traditional concepts of Japanese identity will pose a great hindrance for the church to "reach out meaningfully to the Japanese populace, do effective evangelism and to impact Japanese society," Japanese church workers observed.

In an effort to "blunt the impact of X-Day," several church bodies have taken necessary precautions. The United Church of Christ in Japan opened an X-Day Information Center for the purpose of analyzing X-Day issues for further specific actions. The Japan Evangelical Alliance Church opened a similar organization in July and other evangelical denominations set up committees to study the effects of X-Day or Yasukuni Shrine.

These actions went along with the "small but growing" protest movements started by evangelical, mainline Protestant and Catholic churches in Japan. One of the most significant efforts is the annual rally sponsored by Christian groups around the nation for the purpose of protesting the reinstitution of Feb. 11 as a national holiday. They allege that its reinstitution violates "the principle of separation of church and state." In effect, they call for "dissembling of the imperial system," according to Japan Update, an English quarterly bulletin of the Japan Evangelical Association, published here.

The bulletin says that the X-Day watchers in the church "worry deeply about the overall effect of X-day and the subsequent flood of sympathy and ultra-nationalist sentiment."

The kind of sentiment that is generated through the long mourning period (up to two years after the death of the emperor) may lead to the strengthening of the use of the national flag and the national anthem in schools throughout the country. Both national flag and anthem are seen as "powerful symbols of the imperial system."

In addition, the likely official support of the whole process of the Shinto-prescribed accession rites used to dedicate the new emperor's authority is "in direct violation of the Constitution," which guarantees the separation of church and state.

The bulletin says that during this period the average Japanese will likely reaffirm its Japaneseness "in light of the traditional backdrop of the imperial system and Shinto influence."

Though there will not be any official censorship of the Christian church as happened in the early 17th century and during World

(more)

War II, the overall effect of X-day could "exert a highly adverse impact on the church as a whole."

Last September the National Christian Council in Japan adopted a statement titled "Closing of the Showa era" at its third general committee. The statement says that the council, which is composed of different mainline Christian denominations, criticizes "any attempts to nationalize the Shinto religion organized as it is under the emperor as its highest priest" and refuses "to participate in any Shinto ceremonies created by the Japanese nation upon the occasion of the present emperor's death."

In Japan about one percent of the population is Christian.

#####

SURVEY SHOWS LUTHERAN GLOBAL MEMBERSHIP DROPS

GENEVA (alps) -- A recent survey conducted by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) shows that the global number of Lutherans dropped last year. Now there are about 59 million Lutherans worldwide, a drop of more than 800,000 in church membership mainly in Europe and North America.

The annual survey by the LWF's information bureau shows that the world has 59,003,201 Lutherans, of which 54,938,614 are members or related congregations of the LWF. The survey also shows an increase of 100,000 of the LWF membership, which was caused by the growth in church membership in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

In Asia Indonesia takes the lead with 2.8 million Lutherans. It is followed by India which has 1.1 million Lutherans, and Papua New Guinea takes third place with 640,500 Lutherans.

In the North Sumatra-based Protestant Christian Batak Church (Lutheran) alone, there are 2 million members. Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church, which has 400,000 members, is the largest of the 11 Lutheran bodies in India. The Lae-based Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea has 545,500 members.

The survey shows that Asia (including Australasia and the Pacific) has a total of more than 4.8 million Lutherans, an increase of about 4.4 per cent since the last LWF survey was published a year ago. Africa has 4.9 million Lutherans. Latin America 1.2 million, Europe 39.3 million, and USA and Canada 8.8 million.

The survey also reveals an increase in the number of Lutherans in East Bloc countries such as Poland and Estonia partly due to "a sharp increase in the number of baptisms and confirmations". On the global scale, The Church of Sweden ranks first with 7.7 million members, followed closely by the Chicago-based Evangelical Lutheran Church in America with 5.3 million members.

The LWF survey also includes the new member, Lutheran Church in Great Britain--United Synod (3,000 members) which was accepted by the LWF executive committee last July.

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The LWF statistical data were collected from churches concerned which use different calculating methods and some of the figures are estimates, according to the survey.

#####

NEWLY FORMED AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH SENDS MORE THAN 100 MISSIONARIES IN ASIA, PACIFIC

CHICAGO (alps) --
The newly formed Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has sent some 120 missionaries to work in 10 different countries in Asia and the Pacific, according to information provided by the church's Division for Global Mission (DGM) which has its headquarters here.

The 5.3 million-member ELCA was formed with a merger early last year of the Lutheran Church in America, American Lutheran Church and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches. Through its DGM office, the church carried out the work in cooperation with two dozen of the three dozen Lutheran churches in Asia. (see Table)

TABLE: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Involvement in Asia

COUNTRIES	RELATED CHURCHES/ORGANIZATIONS	NUMBER OF MISSIONARIES
CHINA	China Christian Council	
BURMA	Lutheran Bethlehem Church Burma Council of Churches	
GUAM	Lutheran Church of Guam	
HONG KONG	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong	16
INDIA	Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church South Andhra Lutheran Church Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church Northwest Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church Church of North India Church of South India	9
INDONESIA	Batak Protestant Christian Church Christian Church of Indonesia Christian Protestant Church of Indonesia Simalungun Batak Protestant Church Karo Batak Protestant Church Protestant Christian Church of Nias Evangelical Protestant Church of Timor	7
JAPAN	Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church	98
NEPAL		8
MALAYSIA	Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore	2
PAPUA NEW GUINEA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea	45
SINGAPORE		10
TAIWAN	Taiwan Lutheran Church	13
THAILAND	Church of Christ in Thailand	4

(ALPS ILLUSTRATION)

(Source: Compiled by Warner Luoma, ELCA/DGM)

Among the various ministries the DGM supported were nine university teachers in the People's Republic of China. Also, DGM is related to the Nanjing-based China Christian Council, one of the 23 church bodies which the DGM maintains a relationship in Asia.

Other ministries were conducted by means of personnel or material support, such as scholarships, along with cooperation in a variety

(more)

of projects, which altogether were estimated at a cost of more than US\$7.6 million.

The money was funded toward four regions -- South Asia and Indonesia, Southeast Asia and Papua New Guinea, East Asia and Northeast Asia -- which are manned by staff in Chicago.

Doug Swendseid oversees Northeast Asia which includes Japan and Korea. Delbert Anderson oversees East Asia, which includes the People's Republic of China, Taiwan (Republic of China), Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore. Jack Reents oversees Southeast Asia which includes Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and the South Pacific. Warner Luoma oversees South Asia which includes Nepal, India, Burma, Thailand and Indonesia.

The DGM will likely place a few persons in new work this year, according to the DGM source. In 1990-91 planning for new areas of work "will become more apparent" and will be given higher priority.

#####

LUTHERANS IN HONG KONG PLAN STRATEGY FOR FUTURE IN FACE OF 1997

HONG KONG (alps) -- Lutherans in Hong Kong are gearing up their efforts to train more church workers and build up positive relationships with churches in China. This is part of their strategy in preparing for inevitable social and political changes in Hong Kong after 1997.

"The existence of the church is for the witness of the gospel, and we have to do everything for the great commission of the church." The Rev. John Tse, president of the 12,400-member Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong (ELCHK), told a group of international participants at the urban mission consultation held here recently. Most of the participants were overseas mission representatives from Denmark, Norway, Finland, Switzerland and the U.S.A.

The consultation was sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation's department of church cooperation.

Tse is also president of the Chinese Lutheran Churches Hong Kong Association, the joint Lutheran agency composed of the ELCHK, Tsung Tsin Mission, Hong Kong, the Chinese Rhenish Church, Hong Kong Synod, Hong Kong and Macao Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod. Together they have some 40,000 members.

Despite uncertainty about the future felt largely by the people of Hong Kong, Tse said, "The church has to move ahead even though we are not sure what we should plan for the church now." He said the church has to wait for the finalization of the drafting of the Basic Law, which is now seeking public review, before the church can make any definite decisions about the future. The waiting time may last for two years, he said.

The Basic Law will be used to govern Hong Kong after 1997 when the People's Republic of China (PRC) resumes control over the British

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colony. The Basic Law deals with a wide variety of issues concerning the future of Hong Kong. Its first five-month public consultation ended last September. Christians are concerned about religious freedom, Hong Kong churches' relationship with their counterparts in China and overseas partner churches, and the role of the church in education and social service.

The Lutherans, like many other major denominations, now run a substantial number of schools, clinics and social work services. Thus, the presence of Christians is extensive and influential in many aspects of society, even though its number, together with the Roman Catholics, constitutes only 10 percent of Hong Kong's 5.5 million population.

Tse was recently chosen by the church leaders to replace Methodist pastor, the Rev. Lincoln Lam-hoi Leung, to sit on the Basic Law Consultative Committee, which was entrusted by the PRC government. Its 180 members from many different circles in Hong Kong were given the task of giving advice on matters about the Basic Law. Leung resigned apparently for health reasons.

Tse said that it is important to provide theological training for laypersons as the church prepares for the sweeping changes after 1997. "We hope that theologically trained laypersons can take up the important evangelistic work when need arises in the future," he said.

His tone reflects the considerable uncertainties now felt by many church leaders. They worry about how much room the established churches will have in doing outreach work under a different government after 1997. Especially when they compare the privileges they now enjoy, the kind of favorable (Hong Kong) government support in various aspects of education and social service work, to the restrictions by the Chinese government on mission work in China.

Many church leaders hope that theologically trained laypersons may become the backbone for evangelistic work if established churches were to be restricted by the future government on evangelistic matters after 1997.

Sharing the same strategy was Simon P. K. Sit, lay president of Tsung Tsin Mission, Hong Kong. But he is aware of the limited resources in China. "We try our best to give whatever assistance we can afford to the people in China," Sit said. Pointing out the dialect links between his church members and many Christians who used to have links with Tsung Tsin's Basel Mission in the coastal provinces in China, he said Tsung Tsin plans to give financial assistance to churches in China when necessary, particularly for the Hakka-speaking people there. Most of Tsung Tsin's 8,000 members speak Hakka, a southern Chinese dialect.

Financial support is not the only means to be used by the Lutherans in Hong Kong to lubricate a relationship with Christians in China and prepare for the changes in the coming nine years. They have started to cultivate personal relationships with pastors in China.

"Several of our pastors have visited churches in China which used to have the Rhenish link," said the Rev. Kinson Pong, vice-president of the Chinese Rhenish Church, Hong Kong Synod. "They were invited to even preach there. It was a good opportunity for us to have a chance to talk to the Christians, as well as government officials

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there, and show that the church is doing good for both the Chinese society and its people."

Keeping a relatively low profile in its approach to the 1997 issue, the 10,470-member Rhenish church as a whole does not have formal discussions about strategy for the future. But Pong said that church leaders are aware of the importance of training both laypersons and pastors. In an unprecedented move, a large congregation has introduced Sunday school for adult members.

Pong believes that keeping a low profile can avoid direct conflicts between church and state, which as a result, may cause harm to any opportunities for evangelism, because the 1997 issue is more or less a political one.

The 6,580-member Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod holds a rather explicit role in its relationship with churches in China. President Benjamin Bun-wing Chung has declared that "building up a close relationship with churches in China" is one of the main goals for the church.

On several occasions in the past years, Chung and some church officials visited churches in China, including meetings with Bishop K. H. Ting, president of the Protestant China Christian Council. Late last year Chen Ze-min, vice-principal of Nanjing Theological Seminary in China, gave greetings to the graduates of the synod's Concordia Theological Seminary at its commencement service here.

While most Lutheran church leaders publicly call for a positive attitude toward the 1997 issue, some, like many Hong Kong people, hold a pessimistic view about the future and express privately their lack of confidence in the Basic Law and the commitment of the Chinese government in keeping the present status of church work after 1997.

One Lutheran leader expressed skepticism about the draft of the Basic Law in a joint Lutheran coworkers gathering early last month, claiming that even if they have all the Basic Law terms straightened out, the fate of the church eventually hinges on political changes in China. Others, based on personal reasons and relative links overseas, have filed their immigration applications to foreign consulates, eyeing for a more certain future in which they think can continue their ministries.

-- By David Lin --

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ABSENCE IN MEETING HINTS SHAKY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LWF AND HK SYNOD

HONG KONG (alps) -- The last-minute absence of the delegates of a Lutheran church body at a recent joint Lutheran consultation here (see also last story) hinted at a rather shaky relationship between the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and its member church in Hong Kong.

President Benjamin Bun-wing Chung of the Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod (LC-HKS) said because his church has officially withdrawn its membership from the LWF, his church's participation in any LWF-related activities would be "inappropriate." Chung said, "My understanding of

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the (withdrawal) situation is that my church has officially informed the federation of the withdrawal, even though we did receive a letter from the general secretary who asked us to remain."

The last-minute absence of all LC-HKS representatives at the Urban Mission Consultation (Oct. 24-29) here turned out to be an issue, even though Hong Kong-Synod representatives were actively involved in the preparatory work.

The consultation was sponsored by the LWF's department of church cooperation and was organized by the Chinese Lutheran Churches Hong Kong Association. Participants included representatives of overseas partner churches of the local Lutheran church bodies. The association is a joint agency of five Lutheran church bodies. All together they have some 40,000 members.

Some participants at the consultation suggested that the absence of the Hong Kong-Synod delegates signalled a lack of unity and cooperation among the Lutheran churches here. But others said it did not represent anything because of the presence of the non-LWF member church, Hong Kong and Macao Lutheran Church.

Also invited to the consultation was Dr. Louis Nau, Asia secretary of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's Board for Mission and Services, who at the last minute did not show up for the meeting. The Hong-Kong Synod is a partner church of the St. Louis-based Missouri Synod, which is not a member of the LWF, but the Hong-Kong Synod has been a member since 1979.

Chung said apparently Nau was delayed by a typhoon in the Philippines where he is based, but that he came to Hong Kong after the LWF consultation was over. In a letter to ALPS, Nau said his non-attendance was only due to "weather and other business priorities."

Chung's comment somehow reaffirmed the 6,580-member church's decision to leave the world Lutheran organization. Recently, a few LC-HKS pastors expressed their dissatisfaction over the federation's "inadequate concern" for the needs of its member churches, particularly the LC-HKS.

About a year ago, the former president of the LC-HKS, the Rev. Titus Lee, handed the withdrawal letter to LWF General Secretary Gunnar Staalsett at the LWF-sponsored Asian Lutheran church leaders meeting in Singapore. Both of them talked briefly about the matter and Staalsett invited Lee to reconsider whether his church should withdraw. Lee was replaced by Chung in a church election held a few months later.

The official reason for the withdrawal is apparently related to the change of the LWF constitution in 1984, in which a clause stipulates that member churches should maintain "pulpit-and-altar fellowship" with each other. Officials of the LWF and the Missouri-Synod have already begun dialogues about this and other theological issues. The first meeting was held in December, 1987 and a second one was planned last December.

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CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATORS URGED TO EXPOSE SUFFERING OF WOMEN,
DALITS, TRIBALS IN INDIA

NEW DELHI, India (alps) -- A group of Asian Christian communication workers urged the mass media and churches to expose injustice among the suffering people of India, such as women, Dalits (outcastes and ex-untouchables) and the tribals.

These three groups of people suffer varying degrees of oppression, discrimination and exploitation in Indian society, according to a communique issued at the consultation held here recently. The consultation was sponsored by the Manila-based Asia Region of the World Association of Christian Communication and organized by the New Delhi-based The Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

"Religious and socio-cultural values and attitudes prevalent in society undergird the treatment of women," the communique says. Women in India are discriminated against because of their sex and are kept "dependent and helpless" in the family, despite their overall contribution to family and society.

The statement says that women in the Dalit group and tribal communities "bear the burden of social stigma." In India more than 200 million people are Dalits, who have suffered "one of the worst forms of oppression in the country's history," the statement adds.

The situation of Dalits has worsened, the statement says, because they have been "systematically marginalized" in every aspect of social and economic life which is sanctified by a combination of religious and philosophical doctrines and hierarchical social division.

On the other hand, the Indian tribal people have suffered "in the wake of industrialization and modernization" during the past two centuries. Their lands were taken away and their culture destroyed. They have to struggle for self-identity as well as social, political and economic survival, the statement says.

The statement calls on church and media workers to participate in the process of transforming the "oppressive structures" as part of their mission, as these structures also exist within church and Christian institutions. They urged them to use various means of communication such as folk arts and cultural media to help these people to be freed from continued oppression.

Communication workers at the consultation came from Bangladesh, Malaysia, Nepal, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Australia, the Philippines and India.

In the meantime, the Madras-based Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute offers a Bachelor of Divinity course, which includes courses on Christian communication, women in church and society, Dalit theology, theology of human development and understanding society.

Its syllabus explains that the term "Dalit" means "oppressed" or "broken" in Sanskrit. It says that in Hebrew "Dalit" means "crushed"

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and "downtrodden" and is now applied to refer to "the former depressed classes of India's class-graded society by deliberate choice."

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LUTHERAN CHURCH IN PHILIPPINES CONFERENCE DISCUSS VARIOUS ISSUES

BAGUIO CITY, Philippines (alps) -- Issues and concerns related to evangelism, missions, pastoral needs, inter-Lutheran relations, training, development and social ministries dominated the recent 16th General Conference of the Lutheran Church in the Philippines (LCP) here.

The theme, "The Filipino Lutheran: One faith, one hope, one vision," served to emphasize self-awareness and identity of the LCP as an independent church body. At the same time the LCP recognizes the need for inter-dependence with other Lutheran churches around the world.

Among some important decisions was the move to establish a working relationship with the Norwegian Missionary Society and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission.

Exchange programs and working relationships with other overseas Lutheran Churches will also be explored which have been mandated by previous actions of the LCP.

Two important resolutions were proposed to the Board of Directors for final wording. One was that a Board for Ethics and Discipline be formed, and the other was to revise and amend the LCP Master Plan.

The general direction of the 20,250-member church for attaining self-reliance in their operations on or before the year 2000 was highlighted in terms of mission expansion, evangelism, financial support and administrative structure.

Re-elected for a third term of four years as LCP president was Dr. Thomas P. Batong, who garnered the necessary votes after the first balloting. Batong is currently a member of the Executive Committee of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). Elected as vice-president was the Rev. Victorio Saquilayan, and the Rev. Danilo Zamora was elected secretary.

Aside from the newly elected officers, the new members of the church board include: the Rev. Domingo Sambu, Dr. Benjamin Galapia, Paul Garcia, the Rev. Juanito Basalong, the Rev. Augusto Catangui, the Rev. Eduardo Ladlad, Ouido Rivera and Cesar Canoy.

In his address to the convention, Batong stressed the need to have mission-oriented congregations. "One of the components of a growing church is through evangelism and Bible studies as well as the involvement of laypersons, women and youth in missions," he said.

Since 1948, 31 new congregations have been established, making a total of 134 LCP congregations. The creation of a new district in 1984 has been implemented which will enhance the development and expansion of mission work in the Visayan Islands. Another area which is

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ripe for expansion is the Bicol region, south of Manila where initial contacts have been made.

Recently LCP has established an Office for Development and Social concerns which provides for the necessary staff to concentrate on development and social concern projects. The Community Development Service of the LWF Department of World Service assists this office and serves as a link with other Lutheran churches in looking after needs and financial support.

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INDIA VILLAGE WOMEN LEARN HANDPUMP MAINTENANCE

ORISSA, India (alps) -- Some 50 village women from Nawapara, Kalahandi District, attended a two-day training program on the maintenance of handpumps recently. The subjects ranged from the importance of safe drinking water and diarrhoea control to the identification of defects in hand pumps. The course was co-organized by UNICEF, the Public Health Engineering department of the Orissa State Government and the Lutheran World Service (LWS). LWS has completed 160 tubewells in the drought afflicted Kalahandi district.

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AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL LUTHERAN GIVES THANKS FOR 150 YEARS OF MISSION WORK

ADELAIDE, Australia (alps) -- An Aboriginal Lutheran pastor told an estimated 8,000 people here that he thanked his church for bringing the Christian gospel to his people. The Rev. George Rosendale, who is the field superintendent of the Hope Vale Aboriginal Mission in north Queensland, was one of the preachers at the national Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) thanksgiving service held at the Wayville Showgrounds here on Nov. 20, to mark the 150th anniversary of the arrival of Lutherans in Australia.



Lutheran emigrants
boarding the *Prince
George*
(The Angas monument,
near the River Torrens,
Adelaide)



1838 - 1988

The first Lutheran came to Australia in 1838. Among the first arrivals were two pastors sent out by a mission society in Germany to bring the Christian gospel to Australian Aborigines. They arrived in Adelaide in October.

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A month later, the Rev. August Kavel arrived in Adelaide, together with 178 Lutheran refugees from Silesia, who were seeking religious freedom. More such refugees came in the following years, and settlements were established first at Klemzig, on the banks of the Torrens River, and then at Hahndorf and Lobethal in the Adelaide Hills, and in the Barossa Valley.

The State Governor of South Australia, Sir Donald Dunstan, and Lady Dunstan were among distinguished guests who attended the jubilee service, and gave a greeting. Other visitors included leaders of overseas Lutheran churches, and the South Australian leaders of various other Christian denominations.

A special guest at the jubilee celebrations was Senior Jozef Pospiech, of the Wroclaw Diocese of the Lutheran of Poland. He lives in the area of what was formerly Silesia, where many of the early Lutheran settlers emigrated from.

The Lutheran World Federation, of which LCA is not a member, was represented by Ephorus (Bishop) Soritua Nababan, of the 1.9 million-member Protestant Christian Batak Church in Indonesia. The United States, with whom Australian Lutherans have maintained close relationships, was represented by Dr. Ralph Bohlmann, president of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and Bishop Herbert Chilstrom of the newly merged Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Other visitors came from Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Canada, Finland, Austria and both East and West Germany.

The three-day festival included a premiere of an Australian musical commissioned for the occasion: A Bloke Called Jesus. Adelaide author, Dr. Norman Habel, combined with composer and musician, Robin Mann, to produce a musical loosely based on the Gospel of John, and portraying the life of Christ from a distinctly Australian perspective.

Using visual effects and drama as well as singing, "A Bloke Called Jesus" pictures Christ as "the king of the bush." The musical received a standing ovation. Elective inspirational sessions, a visual expo of the Lutheran church's ministry, a children's festival, and a challenge evening entitled "Toward 2000" were also part of the program.

In "Toward 2000," LCA President Lance Steicke challenged Australian Lutherans to intensify their efforts to share the gospel heritage their forebears brought with them with their fellow Australians.

The Rev. Paul Albrecht outlined new developments facing the church's ministry to Aborigines, and Dr. Vic Pfitzner, principal-elect of the Luther Seminary, spoke on the church's ecumenical role.

Keynote speaker for the opening two days, the Rev. Harry Wendt, spoke on Christian calling and Christian community. A former Australian pastor, he now heads an international adult Bible study ministry based in Indianapolis, U.S.A.

The LCA has 110,000 members, almost half of whom live in South Australia. The church also operates a publishing house, a network of homes for the aged, a theological seminary, a training college for church school teachers and other lay workers. It also runs an extensive

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ministry among Aborigines, particularly in Central Australia and north Queensland, a media ministry that spans the continent, and a rapidly developing primary and secondary school system. (From LCA)

CANADIAN LUTHERANS EXTEND MISSION AMONG CHINESE IMMIGRANTS

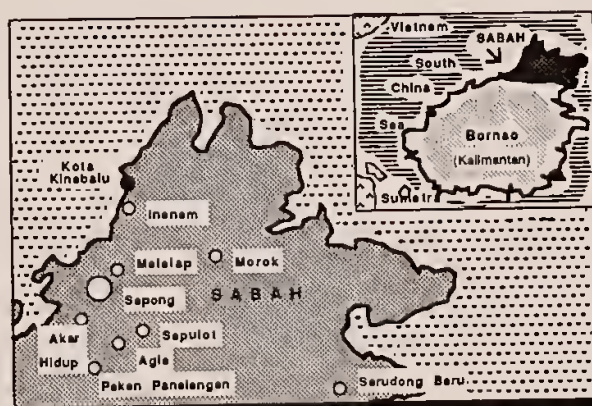
WINNIPEG, Canada (alps) -- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada's (ELCIC) board of Canadian Mission decided at a recent meeting here to extend its mission work among the increasing number of ethnic Chinese in Calgary, Alberta, according to the Rev. James Chell, executive director of the church's division for Canadian mission. He said that a congregation in Calgary will host a new Chinese mission, and the current challenge of the church is "to bear new witness to the new people."

At present, ELCIC has eight Chinese-speaking congregations in Canada, two each in Vancouver, Toronto and Edmonton, one each in Montreal and Winnipeg. Citing the growing opportunities of mission, Chell said that one half of 25,000 Asians immigrated to Canada last year are Chinese people. Seventy-five percent of them came from Hong Kong alone. The rest came from China, Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore. Moreover, 7,000 to 10,000 Chinese students study in Canada. By the year 2000, the intake of immigrants to Canada will increase to 300,000 while the Canadian birth rate remains negative.

Among the new immigrants landed last year there were 15,000 East Indian Asians and 18,000 Hispanic language people from Central and South America, Chell said.

PROFILE: MALAYSIAN BASEL CHURCH EXTENDS EVANGELISTIC WORK AMONG TRIBAL PEOPLE

KOTA KINABALU, Sabah, Malaysia (alps) -- Evangelism work of the Basel Christian Church in Malaysia (BCCM) started in Sepulot which is located in the interior Pensiangan District. Sepulot is inhabited predominantly by Murut animists. From there evangelism work extended to Belaron, five miles (about eight kilometers) from Sepulot [see map], and then to nearby Agis from where it spread to villages along the riverside.



(ALPS ILLUSTRATION)

Pensiangan District is situated at the very heart of the interior of Borneo island which is southeast of Sabah, next to the border of Kalimantan (of Indonesia). It is a region covered with a thick, heavy rain forest which produces timber in Sabah.

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One must travel two-thirds of the journey to Sepulot on gravel roads which are darkened with clouds of dust, and during the rainy season the roads get muddy. The roads were constructed by a timber company for use by heavy trucks to transport logs out of Pensiangan forest. Undoubtedly, these trucks are the kings of the road while visiting vehicles have to give way.

The journey to Sepulot is a six-hour, 200-mile (322-kilometer) drive from Kota Kinabalu. After Sepulot, the structure of the road changes from gravel to laterite soil, so that during a heavy downpour it is extremely difficult to drive to Agis, which is 12 miles (19.32 kilometers) from Sepulot.

Agis is the terminus for the road journey. Beyond this place, the means of transportation is motorboat. The journey to the chapel situated at the hillside of the riverside in Pagalungan is an exciting experience.

The scenery is extremely peaceful and all things are assembled in perfect order that sets forth tranquility. There is always a welcoming atmosphere when heading toward Pagalungan, as the trees at river banks bow humbly to moving motorboats.

In the rainy season, it can be very dangerous to travel by boat as the river currents are swift with turbulent rapids. Boating over these rapids gives thrilling effects which suspend the fear of water. If there is a downpour during the journey, everyone in the boat would be drenched even with the protection of umbrellas. On the other hand, traveling by river during the dry season can be very tedious and tiresome as boats have to be dragged and pushed.

Most of the villagers residing along the river from Pagalungan to Pensiangan have heard the gospel. Each village has a chapel where villagers gather to worship and have fellowship with one another.

The Silungoi Village is situated at the south of Pagalungan. Further down the river is Siggatal Village. At this point the Sepulot river is divided into two. The lower stream leads to Pekan Pensiangan and takes another hour by boat to reach. On the way, there are many Christian villages including Lumbagas, Inagaak and Babalitan. There are also small villages which have a population of less than 200.

Pekan Pensiangan is covered with green-peaked hills. It is the business center in the Pensiangan district. It has a medical clinic, an old court house and a rest house. This township is of historical interest. It was the base for the Japanese troops during the Second World War and later for the Indonesian troops. Historical remains such as the trench and torture center are interesting spots to visit. Three Chinese grocery shops have been there for more than 20 years.

Like many indigenous peoples, the Muruts in this region have impressive traditions that make their lifestyle very colorful. They live in longhouses built mainly along the riverside. The style and structure of longhouses differ from one village to another. Inside the longhouse, one room represents one family. All members in the family sleep in one room. Sometimes a few couples sleep in one room. They also share one big kitchen, which represents a communal style of life.

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The Muruts depend very much on hunting, fishing and shifting cultivation of hill paddy for their livelihood. They also plant a common crop, Tapioca, for the produce of sago and "tapai." Their main food is rice, but sago becomes the main source of carbohydrates when they are short of rice.

The Muruts enjoy dancing and singing. Cockfighting is their favorite pastime. However, some of their traditions such as the drinking of tapai, can hinder the Muruts' social and economic development. Tapai is a kind of tapioca wine which is indispensable at any kind of social gathering, such as a wedding or burial. The practice of everyone sucking the wine from the same straw out of a big "Tajau" (a big earthenware jar) can be harmful to health, as there is a very high chance of spreading disease in that way. Normally Muruts drink until they get drunk which may lead to fighting. Consequently, continual heavy consumption of alcohol curtails their ability to work the following day.

Murut girls tend to marry at a tender age of 12 or 13, though it is not very healthy for them. They also practice polygamy. Adultery and divorce are very common among non-Christians. Black magic is practised and they keep charms or "jimat," but Christians gave up their charms to be burned.

One unique tradition of the Muruts is their burial rites. The dead body is put into a big jar and left to decay in a specially built shed. The believers decorate the grave sheds with red-cross flags.

The Muruts have a comparatively low standard of living. Besides the need for spiritual nourishment, there are other areas of life where their needs are great. At this stage, the Murut church has a long way to go to reach the three-self goal, because it is spiritually, financially and physically inadequate.

Traditions mentioned earlier are partly responsible for the slow socio-economic development in the Murut community. As a church, BCCM is participating in a health project whereby mountain water is channelled to villages so that villagers no longer have to use the murky river water for consumption. The clear-water project is in Pensiangan.

In Saping there are six mission fields in this region. They include Malalap, Mailo, Gumisi, Angalor, Akar Hidup and Mansansor. In 1963 the Rev. Herman Hofmeister founded the Saping Farming Scheme and started to evangelize the local Muruts, as he involved in the Interior Parish Ministry. Many Chinese, Rungus and Murut families moved over there to earn their living. As a result, the first mission center was established in Akar-Hidup.

These areas can be reached by road except for Gumisi and Angalor which are severed from the main road by the Padas River. One has to take approximately 20 minutes to walk through the jungle to Gumisi and another 20 minutes from Gumisi to Angalor. The standard of living in the Saping region is generally higher than Morok and Pensiangan, perhaps because it has easy access to road transport.

Presently Kampung Malalap does not have a pastoral worker. Kampung Mailo is situated in a mountainous area about 20 miles (32.2 kilometers) from Tenom. The majority of the people are farmers who live

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very far apart from each other. Normally on Saturday they spend the night at a nearby church building. Then they worship punctually at 9 a.m. the following day.

Kampung Akar Hidup is situated 17 miles (27.4 kilometers) from Tenom. The standard of living there is better because Murut families can cultivate the lands which they own. Kampung Mansansor is a new area where believers built a new chapel.

Morok is a village 82 miles (132 kilometers) away from the busy town of Sandakan. In 1967 Dr. Christopher Willis, a medical doctor, initiated evangelism work in this area. Willis's departure led to BCCM's participation in evangelism work among the Kadazans.

The church set out four objectives to improve mission work in this area. They include:

- a) the establishment of a mission center in Morok;
- b) to further develop the evangelism work in the Sungai Labuk regions;
- c) to train locals for mission work;
- d) to improve the economic situation of the Kampung folks.

Basically, the mission station is the direct responsibility of BCCM's Sandakan Church. Members of Sandakan have faithfully invested their money and time and have given painstaking effort to this task.

They continue to support this mission work in spite of financial difficulties. The effort by the Sandakan church is never in vain. Many villages have chapels now. They are in Morok, Bias, Barayung, Bilai, Ansun, Binlulukan, Komasi, Romanta, Pamol and Safoda.

Any venture is bound to have obstacles in reaching the target. The most prevalent problem faced by the Kampung folks is financial independence. The Kampung lifestyle contributes to their financial hardships. They practice shifting cultivation. Also, fishing and hunting depend very much on the catch of the day. This erratic livelihood is a factor contributing to a de-stabilized financial income. Perhaps their unstable financial income causes them to have trouble understanding the concept of tithing.

The problems faced by the Sandakan church can be listed as follows:

- a) training of pastoral workers to shepherd increasing members with appropriate gospel teaching;
- b) construction of chapels in many small Kampung for believers to worship together;
- c) present pastors and lay leaders to continue to refresh themselves with the gospel;
- d) deeper understanding of tribal culture, traditions and beliefs in order to understand their problems;
- e) further equipping the people to grow into spiritual maturity.

Serudong Baru is a village located in Tawau district. In December 1983 a chapel was built there. The majority of the people are Murut and some 40 members worship there. The Sunday school has a regular attendance of 30 students. Presently the church has no catechist.

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The mission work in Kota Kinabalu commenced in 1974 at Inanam. The response from the indigenous people was overwhelming and a subcommittee was set up to specially oversee this mission work. Evangelism work extended to other areas beyond Inanam and Menggatal to such places as Telipok, Karambunai, Pinang and Binaung.

Chapels were built in areas where there were believers. At first lay leaders conducted weekly worship services. Since 1977 pastoral workers have been employed to continue evangelistic work. The Chinese and indigenous congregations worked together to plan church-building projects. When dedicating church buildings, both Chinese and indigenous people gathered under one roof and worshipped together. The bond of love that prevailed among members continued to enhance the fellowship.

Later, the subcommittee sent a team to explore the prospective mission areas in Keningau, Nabawan, Sepulot and Pensiangan. As evangelistic work among the indigenous people expanded to tribes in many different areas, the church has had to face many coordination problems.

In 1978 the structure of mission work was centralized and the Central Evangelism Committee was set up to monitor evangelistic work throughout the country. The Kota Kinabalu Missionary Center continues to focus on the designated areas, which include Kokol, Tembongon, Tolongan, Peniangan, Binaung, Karamburai, Piasau, Bingkulas, Nabalun and Bukit Giling.

The Kota Kinabalu Mission Center has created an adoption system whose strategy involves asking each ethnic Chinese congregation to adopt two indigenous churches with the aim of providing love and care. The ethnic Chinese church worker will frequently visit the designated chapels in Kota Kinabalu mission. Hopefully, the interaction between the Chinese and the indigenous members will foster understanding and establish meaningful fellowship. As relationships between the two groups become more cordial, the area of needs can be singled out easily. Perhaps, this is a good action plan for other parishes to strengthen their ties with the indigenous congregations.

Mission work encompasses the area of community service. The ethnic Chinese congregation normally bears the major part of the expenses. They try to meet both the financial and physical needs of the indigenous church. Fund-raising methods include bazaar, mission dinner, joggathon, special donation, Christmas offering, faith-pledge card to mission and so on. It is the hope and prayer of the Kota Kinabalu Parish Mission to see the indigenous church move toward self-reliance.

In August last year the Evangelism Parish Council for the Bahasa Malaysia congregation in Kota Kinabalu was officially installed during "Mission Week." This is the first committee formed at the parish level for the Bahasa Malaysia-speaking congregation in Sabah. This introduces the church to the process a church must go through to gain self-reliance. (From BCCM News)

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FEATURE: IT'S 'GOLDEN TIME' FOR CHRISTIANITY IN CHANGING
CHINA

MINNEAPOLIS, Minnesota (alps) -- Each time I go to China I am astonished at the profound change of this 5,000-year-old civilization and the rapidity with which over one billion people are being affected by these changes. Even in the countryside, where traditional values and practices tend to cling most tenaciously, changes are penetrating the most conservative regions.

In many rural areas illiteracy is still widespread. Water is still drawn from wells, laundry still pounded on the rocks along the river banks and male children are still preferred. But in these same regions peasant families are increasingly releasing one or more members of the family from farm labor to earn extra yuan (Chinese currency) in neighboring industries or home enterprises.

Most Chinese, even in the countryside, now have access to viewing at least a small screen black and white TV. If a family does not own one, a neighbor may. Or at least one's work unit. And with television come multiple new influences, many of them unwelcome, such as the so-called bourgeoisie side-effects of Deng Xiaoping's policy of opening up to the international community, including the West.

Certainly in Shanghai, a trend-setting metropolis, I witnessed change. Shanghai is quite a drab city, crowded beyond imagination, where the average family lives in one room, perhaps two. If they are in an apartment building they probably share kitchen and bathroom facilities with others on their floor. Those living in back alleys share outdoor faucets and pull their little charcoal burners outside each morning to prepare "xifan" (rice gruel) for breakfast.

But with the new economic policies and increasing prosperity due to private enterprise, these same households may own or share ownership of a small washing machine, which I often saw rolled out into the alley to be hooked up to the public faucet. As I biked through these alleys at night and glanced inside the tiny homes, I would see TV's showing perhaps Peking opera or maybe an English lesson.

Shanghai was temporarily my home because of an exchange relationship established several years ago between St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota, and East China Normal University, one of China's so-called "key" universities, that is, a top-quality school, centrally administered.

The year I went (1986-87), this exchange involved not only me, representing the faculty, but also four recent St. Olaf graduates with the purpose of teaching English. Six Chinese students were sent to St. Olaf in exchange for a full year. My teaching responsibility was to prepare graduate students and young instructors for taking qualifying exams for graduate work here in the US, one being the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and the other Graduate Record Examination.

These students, you can well imagine, were highly motivated. Many are seeking to go abroad and for most of them, English is the key. And even if they don't make it abroad now, English is still a key to

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success. They were exceedingly bright. The Chinese educational system, being as competitive as it is, from the kindergarten level and up, and universities being so few for such a large population, only the very brightest attain to this educational level.

In addition to these older students, I also taught a class of college sophomores who showed even more evidence of the changing times. They were quick to advocate divorce as a solution to marital problems, were crazy about Christmas caroling and disco dancing and in discussions dared to touch the edges of the topic of "democracy." To discuss democracy openly is, of course, imprudent. They differed also from my graduate students in that these younger students had no personal memories of the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). As a result, although they joined the rest of the nation in outwardly denouncing the movement, their denunciations held a tinge of nostalgia, a hint of longing for a time when there was excitement, when restrictions seemed completely dissolved, and when the opinions and activities of young people were of great consequence.

Some of the students who participated in the large student demonstrations that year joined for those reasons. But others were genuine in their calls for "freedom" and "democracy," and provide good evidence that students in China are advocates for change -- as has been the case earlier in China's 20th-century history. Many students were defying the law by writing "dazibao," or large-character posters, which had been so popular some years earlier on Peking's "Democracy Wall."

In other ways as well students are pushing opportunities for change. Couples now freely stroll down the street arm in arm. In fact, along Shanghai's Bund on a warm spring evening one can observe much more than that! And writers are becoming more and more daring to the point that some have had works banned on moral grounds. But usually the situation is quite innocent. One of my sophomore students came to my room very excitedly one day. She had written love poem and was among those selected to take part in a public reading of romantic poetry by campus writers. She gave me a ticket and I attended. Never had I seen that auditorium so packed. Even the aisles were impassable. The reading lasted for two hours or more during which time the very appreciative audience remained enrapt.

In certain ways, however, students today are not only promoters of change, but can also be said to be victims of the rapid changes taking place. In one sense to be a youth in Maoist China was easy. The goals were clear; values were never ambiguous. Right and wrong were incontrovertibly defined for the individual. Personal decision making was at a minimum. But now, with the increased openness and increased freedom, young people, who have not been taught to think or act independently must begin to do so, ready or not.

Although many brave spirits wholeheartedly welcome the current changes, others, especially those from more conservative backgrounds, feel confused and insecure. For them, and for the population in general, job security is no longer to be taken for granted. Increasing numbers of employers are free to hire and fire as they see fit and many worry about this breaking of the so-called "iron rice bowl."

In many students I sensed a vacuum as they watched the clarities of the past becoming clouded, and newisms, most especially

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materialism arriving with force. And so quite a number of students came to me asking to borrow a Bible or to attend church with me. Most young people, judging from my experience, know nothing about Christianity. Most hold the official view of religion which delegates all organized religions to positions only slightly superior to superstition. Because of this many are in great perplexity about us Americans: It seems to them totally incongruous that a nation as scientifically and technologically advanced as the US should also be known as a Christian nation. Science and religion, they are taught, are incompatible. For many, then, Christianity is simply a fascinating curiosity.

Coupled with this active curiosity about our faith is an increasingly open attitude toward Christianity on the part of the government, not because of any great love for Christianity, as Bishop K. H. Ting, president of the China Christian Council, frequently points out, but simply to strengthen the unity of the nation in the future goals of the country, specifically, the Four Modernizations. This increased openness, which is wonderful for Christianity in China, still leaves the church with serious problems as it tries to deal with its changing situation. They lack material resources, they severely lack trained leaders, and in spite of the fine clause regarding religious freedom in the constitution, they nevertheless lack freedom as we here in America experience it.

The severe lack of trained leaders stems from basically two things: the rapid increase in numbers of Christians (twice the rate of population increase) and the absence of any kind of Christian training centers, to say nothing of church worship, for at least 14 years. Thus most pastors in China are old; many, if not most, are already well past retirement age. Yet they are giving of their services to the churches and to the seminaries. Accordingly, future seminary professors are being prepared now by sending a few of the most promising graduates to do advanced study abroad, although they are badly needed at home. There are six in North America this year: three in Canada and three in the US. As far as local pastors are concerned, even with the opening of 11 small seminaries in addition to the large one in Nanjing, there is still a woeful lack - as there will be for some time.

I was told that in Honan, for example there is one pastor for every 10,000 believers. To meet this problem the church has taken several measures, one of which is a publication for lay leaders. Originally it was intended as a correspondence course, but with an overwhelming response of well over 30,000 wishing to take the course, it has become instead a periodical which includes practical helps for sermons and Bible studies, and so on.

Even in the tiny chapel in Xindian at the foot of Jigongshan (Rooster Mountain in Honan Province, Central China) where my grandmother had worked as a missionary, I saw the current issue of this journal lying on the crude desk of the 90-year-old lay leader. I asked him whether he found it helpful. With a toothless but radiant smile he said, "I read it from cover to cover immediately when it arrives."

Because of the widespread revivals spreading throughout Honan, the lack of trained leaders is even more severely felt and many heresies have begun to flourish there, many of them strange indeed. To help meet these problems, 48 lay leaders were selected from Christian communities

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in Honan to receive special intensive biblical and theological training for one year in the Nanjing Seminary.

That is not all. This spring five pastors forming China's first evangelistic team since 1949, including pastors from Shanghai, Hangzhou and elsewhere, traveled to a number of areas in Honan over a period of a month. Christian groups, even from distant areas sent their representatives, well equipped with tape recorders. To make it worth their while, the meetings lasted half a day each.

Library resources, not to mention textbooks, are almost non-existent in the small seminaries. It has been left up to the teachers themselves to prepare their teaching materials. Therefore, this summer in Kuling, there is a gathering of seminary teachers representing all the Protestant seminaries in China, to discuss for two weeks their specific textbook needs and strategies to meet this need. A committee selected from this group was to remain for one more month in Kuling in order to begin the work of preparing texts.

In many other ways as well Chinese Christians have committed themselves to being, as Luther said, "little Christs," bringing the gospel in many creative ways to their own people. A young Christian woman author in Shanghai, Chen Naishan, who was attracted to Christianity through reading authors such as Tolstoy, is now writing novels of her own which I hear have become popular. These novels, like C.S. Lewis' fiction, are written from the Christian perspective and embody Christian values and ideals, though Christianity is not explicitly mentioned.

In the political sphere, Christians are being elected to the local people's congresses and are thus bringing the presence of Christ into these areas. And the Amity Foundation, created at the initiative of Christians, has now taken the initiative of approaching China's main book distributor, the Xinhua Shudian (New China Bookshop), with the request that Bibles now be sold not only within church premises but also in the book stores. This request was granted in principle, though technical details remain to be worked out.

Finally, simply in their daily lives, Christians have become the "salt" and the "light" of society, witnessing to Christ by being conscientious workers, constructive citizens, caring neighbors and people who are committed to living their faith. As a result, certain villages which have become almost completely Christian are noted by the local officials to be nearly crime free and in return are given certain privileges.

This is, as the president of one of the seminaries said, indeed a "golden time for Christianity in China." During this period of great change in China, the Christians in China are dedicating themselves to Christ with a sense of urgency and excitement I think many of us in the West have lost. We can be a part of the miracle that is happening in the Church in China by giving them our full support.

-- By Charlotte M. Gronseth --

(Gronseth wrote this story which was first published in Lutheran Literature Society for the Chinese Bulletin.)

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BRIEFS:

HAMILTON: The final draft of the mission statement and mission goals of the Lutheran Church of New Zealand (LCNZ) topped the agenda of this year's church convention which was held here, Apr. 22-24. The LCNZ has about 2,700 members.

TAIPEI: The awareness of the root causes of the growing problem of regional trafficking of prostitutes in Asia was the focus of two seminars sponsored by the Rainbow Project of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, the Taipei-based Christian concern group on prostitutes. Situational reports from Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and Taiwan were presented.

HONG KONG: In a historic move, the 12,400-member Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong decided to ordain women. The decision took place at the church's general meeting here, Mar. 27, after a little more than one year of intensive debate, which was triggered by the application from a local congregation which wanted to ordain its woman evangelist, Chan Sek-Mui. Chan has worked in that congregation for about eight years and is considered the first candidate for ordination. She said her church believed that the ordination of women does not violate the teachings of the Bible.

BANGKOK: Fifty-four Thai people were baptized last Christmas and become members of the joint mission venture, Lutheran Mission in Thailand, according to Chairman Christopher Woie.

TOKYO: The Anglican church in Japan has called a woman missionary from the Philippines to work among the growing number of Philipinns here. Evelyn Nueza from Mindanao started work in March under the auspices of the Tokyo Conference of the Japan Seikokai (Anglican) Church, among the estimated 36,000 Philipinas. Many of them are believed to work as hostesses, strippers and prostitutes in the entertainment business, according to Japan Christian Activity News.

ADELAIDE: The Lutheran Church in Australia is studying the issue of the ordination of women. A sub-committee appointed by the church's commission on theology and interchurch relations is currently seeking responses from women about their role in the church. The task of the committee, according to Secretary Peter Kriewaldt, is to "examine critically the church's past and present stance on this important issue." Initial responses indicated that the "overwhelming majority" affirmed that "women are created equal to men in being but different in function," and the participation of women in "a wide range" of church ministries is noted.

MANILA: Even though abortion is illegal in the Philippines, recent studies show that it seems to be on the rise in all age groups. Women between 20-24 recorded the highest abortion rate, according to the studies presented by Vilma Nafarrete of the University of the Philippines. Three major reasons are cited for abortion: too many children, economic difficulties and illegitimacy.

SINGAPORE: The Trinity Theological College has launched a S\$2.5 million (about US\$1.3 million) campus renovation-cum-extension plan to cope with the increase in student enrolment and a more

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extensive educational program. The plan includes a new 130-seat library and a four-story hostel wing, according to the latest issue of the college newsletter, Trumpet. Principal Choong Chee-Pang, a Lutheran theologian, said the building project and faculty development are the top priorities of the school.

OBITUARY: Dr. Henry Hamann, the former principal (1980-85) of Luther Seminary in Adelaide, Australia, died on Dec. 30, 1988. He was 72. Born in a Lutheran missionary family in Vellore, South India, Hamann was ordained as a pastor of the Lutheran Church of Australia in 1938.

BOOKS: A first-hand account of how the Lutheran Church in Korea was born was written by Dr. Wong-Yong Ji in his new book, "A History of Lutheranism in Korea--A Personal Account." The book is the first volume in the Concordia Seminary Monograph Series (801 De Mun Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63105, USA). Ji, a former Asia secretary of the Lutheran World Federation department of church cooperation, is currently teaching systematic theology at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri and Luther Seminary near Seoul.

HONG KONG CHRISTIAN GROUP CALLS FOR COMMITMENT BEYOND 1997

HONG KONG (alps) -- A local Christian group sought city-wide support of an appeal which calls for Christians in Hong Kong to voyage beyond 1997 and together face the tremendous social and political changes in the run-up to 1997.

In a letter addressed to "those coworkers in Christ who call Hong Kong their home," the Hong Kong Church Renewal Movement (HKCRM) made an appeal last month to church bodies, Christian organizations and theological seminaries urging them to express "their faith to God, their commitment to the Kingdom of Heaven and their concern for Hong Kong and China."

They have collected more than 270 signatures from the supporting organizations. The statement says that despite the 1997 issue which caused the immigration tide, the majority of Hong Kong people cannot emigrate or do not plan to emigrate. "At this point of time, we are willing to enter the community, propagate the gospel and serve the public."

The statement, titled "Mission Hong Kong--2000," lists seven common concerns among Christians in the run-up to 1997. They are immigration, leadership vacuum, spiritual wounds, mission, evangelism, Christian use of mass media and the future of China.

Their concern for China gives special attention to the human rights issue. "Because of Christ's respect and care for the people, the church in Hong Kong should bear special concern for the human rights problems in China and the future of Hong Kong," says the statement.

"At the same time we should express our concern with love toward the Christians in China," adds the statement, "and within

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possible limits provide appropriate assistance." The active support of the building up of China, its progress and development is also a concern of the people of Hong Kong, the statement says.

The statement went on to say that freedom of speech, freedom of religious belief, freedom to promulgate one's faith and the freedom of travel must continue in Hong Kong, as these conditions are important for international mission outreach to be maintained.

In order to consolidate and expand church ministries, the younger leaders now being trained in theological institutions and Christian organizations should be able to fill the vacuum created by the immigration wave. The statement says that it hopes some emigrants will return to commit themselves to the local ministries.

The statement encourages churches to utilize the print as well as the electronic media for the purpose of evangelism, as Hong Kong will enter a new information age with the introduction of cable television, a new radio station, satellite communication and the advancement of computer technology.

Mission to needy people such as new immigrants, the victims of child abuse, broken marriages, unjust systems and abandoned aged people, continues to be an important part of the various church work in the midst of social, economic and political changes in the run-up to 1997.

In July 1997 Hong Kong will be handed over by the British government to the People's Republic of China, under which it will become a special administrative region.

The statement calls for Christians to be concerned about secular issues such as political reform and the Basic Law, which will become the law of Hong Kong after 1997.

The statement is a summary of a longer version which was announced in a HKCRM fast-and-prayer meeting last July (see also ALPS No. 4/88, p. 6).

Among the signers of the appeal letter are the Rev. Kinson Pong, a vice-president of the Chinese Rhenish Church, Hong Kong Synod, Dr. Philomen Choi of Breakthrough, a Christian media and counseling organization for the youth and Ted Hsueh, director of Christian Communications, a publication and China study agency.

"We hope the signatures will give us a rough idea of how many Christians are pledged to stay after 1997 and we shall form a network to encourage each other in the face of the tremendous social and political changes that are taking place in Hong Kong," said Wai-Kan Yu, general secretary of the movement.

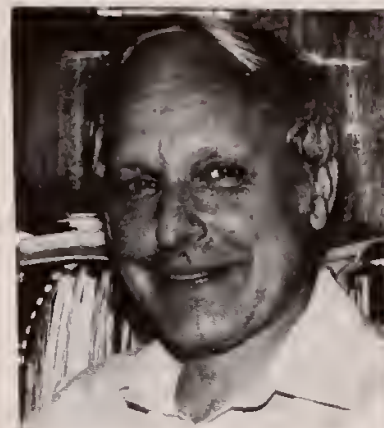
In a related development, a seven-member human rights activist delegation from Hong Kong composed of a Roman Catholic priest and a Lutheran missionary, went to the Chinese capital city of Beijing, Mar. 29, with some 24,000 signatures calling for the early release of Chinese political prisoners, one of whom is a Hong Kong resident.

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The signatures were accepted by the Chinese legislative body, the National People's Congress standing committee, almost a week after its seizure by the customs officials in the Tianjin (Tientsin) airport which sparked widespread debate in Hong Kong about the incident and raised new concerns about human rights in post-1997 Hong Kong.

Newspapers reported that customs officials claimed that the short-term visitors carrying large amounts of "printed matter" not for personal use violates Chinese law. But the delegates expressed concern about their rights to petition.

The Rev. Hans Lutz, a missionary of the Switzerland-based Basel Mission who has been working in Hong Kong for 21 years, was a member of the delegation. He said that it is an urgent task to look at human rights problems in Hong Kong in the run-up to 1997.



Hans Lutz (ALPS Photo)

Lutz is the chairman of the Hong Kong Human Rights Commission, which was formed by 12 agencies, mostly church-related, early last year to observe the 40th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

#####

ASIAN LUTHERAN YOUTH TACKLE WORSHIP PROBLEMS

MADRAS, India (alps) -- A group of Asian Lutheran youth leaders urged that young people in the church should have the chance to "regularly perform certain tasks in congregational worship" in order to understand the traditional components of worship.

This was one of the findings of the recent worship workshop which was held here last March and was attended by some 23 participants from 18 Lutheran church bodies in Asia. The workshop was sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation department of church cooperation youth and students program.

Under the theme, "Participation, unity and action," the participants summarized their findings at the end of the workshop. They listed a few problems in worship life among the youths: the generation gap, mechanical stereotype liturgy unrelated to contemporary challenges, lack of opportunity to participate and lack of interest in worship, as well as solutions.

Despite the general lack of understanding of the traditional components of worship among the youth, the group felt that the opportunity for the youth to offer their talents in congregational worship is a prerequisite in order to further understand worship.

In terms of unity, the group encouraged that the seeking of unity in worship should not only take place within the congregation, but

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it should also be extended to other congregations, locally and internationally.

The group affirmed that worship should be linked to social and economic concerns. The lack of application in a sermon and in worship "is a sign of sickness in our spirituality," the group said.

They said the avoidance of burning issues of a given context, the kind of "safe" and "comfortable" application of worship, contributes to lack of Lutheran action in tackling the needs in Asia.

Together with their findings, the participants also drafted worship outlines. They focused on "Peace and justice in Asia," "The Asian family and worship" and "Receive salvation and help to protect life (human creation)." (LWI)

#####

CONTROVERSIAL CODE ON RELIGIONS IN CHINA PROMPTS CHURCH ACTION

HONG KONG (alps) -- A controversial administrative code which allows a south China provincial government to tighten control over religious activities there has prompted strong reactions from Christians in both Hong Kong and China.

The code which requires that places where any kind of religious activity is held be registered with the authorities, was handed down by the Guangdong provincial government.

Amid fears that such sensitive codes would have adverse effects on religious freedom in post-1997 Hong Kong, some Christians in Hong Kong voiced their concerns in a special meeting recently. They decided to study the issue through the concern group, Joint Conference of Christians on the Response to the Basic Law.

The Basic Law, which will become law of Hong Kong after 1997 when the British colony returns to China rule, contains clauses related to religious activities. The draft of the Basic Law is currently under public debate.

Among the clauses that cause Christian concern are freedom of religious belief and the autonomy of religious organizations from state intervention.

The appearance of the restrictive administrative code has led some Christians in Hong Kong to believe that China has a different concept of freedom of religious belief, because the Chinese constitution also guarantees freedom of religious belief.

Compared with their counterparts in China, Hong Kong churches and their related organizations enjoy fuller autonomy over its property and staff. About 10 percent of the 5.5 million population are Christians and they run extensive social service and education programs.

Late last year a group of Christians went to Beijing where a top official of the Religious Affairs Bureau reportedly told the group that she had no knowledge of the administrative code but assured them of

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a highly autonomous future special administrative region which Hong Kong will become after 1997. The bureau is structured under the State Council of the Central Government of the People's Republic of China.

Helena Wong, who also went to Beijing, is a staff member of the Hong Kong Christian Institute, one of the concern groups. She said that her group is seeking dialogue with religious bureau officials on this issue. "Perhaps we may have to go to Beijing again, because the officials have encouraged us to continue contacting them," she said.

Raymond Fung, head of evangelism for the World Council of Churches, called for Hong Kong Christians to openly express their opinions to oppose the appearance of similar codes in Hong Kong, so that international church and organizations can consider relaying support in this matter.

Church observers here said that it has been "quiet" since last month, referring to reports about forced registrations of Christian gatherings at homes in Guangzhou, the capital city of Guangdong, and the effect of a top Chinese church official's action on this issue.

In the latest issue of a Chinese church magazine, Bridge, Bishop K. H. Ting of the (Protestant) Church of China said in the interview that his office has written to the Religious Affairs Bureau about his church's position on the issue.

He said, "If this is a measure aimed at eliminating meetings of Christians in homes without first providing more suitable places for them, it is an infringement on religious freedom."

Ting, chairperson of the Nanjing-based China Christian Council and the Three-self Patriotic Movement, further charged that some government cadres did not fully implement the constitution on freedom of religious belief.

Ting suggested that the criteria for registration of places for religious activities be made public "at least for the sake of openness and public supervision."

Ting's action on the issue was unusual and is the first time since China has reopened its doors in the late 70's a top church official in China has taken such action.

Titled "The regulations on administration of venues for religious activities," the Guangdong code stipulates that all venues for religious activities are subject to the administration of the provincial government.

This includes Buddhist and Taoist temples, Islamic mosques, Protestant and Catholic churches, seminaries and other places for religious gathering. Under the code religious workers and seminary graduates are required to get government approval prior to work, travel, publishing and printing religious materials.

#####

CANADA, HONG KONG LUTHERANS FORGE LINKS IN MISSION

HONG KONG (alps) -- High-level negotiations began between the Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod (LC-HKS) and the Lutheran Church-Canada (LCC) to possibly draw up plans to start cooperative mission work among the growing Chinese population in Canada.

In the week-long (Mar. 12-17) visit here, the LCC sent a three-person delegation to respond to a call by the LC-HKS to investigate the feasibility of the Hong Kong-Canada partnership, which, if successful, may lead to Hong Kong pastors working in Vancouver and Toronto.

Led by the president, the Rev. Edwin Lehman, of the 60,000-member Canadian church which is based in Winnipeg, the delegation attended a seminar on evangelizing Chinese in Canada, which was organized by the LC-HKS.



Lehman (right) and Chung (ALPS Photo)

Lehman and the other Canadian representatives, the Rev. H. Ruf, president of the LCC's Alberta-British Columbia District, and the Rev. Albin Stanfel, president of the Ontario District, met with top officials of the LC-HKS and exchanged ideas on various aspects of the work of both churches, most of which had to do with the LC-HKS's proposals on partnership in mission.

"We have to evaluate the proposals because they involve a long term financial commitment for us, and we have to ask ourselves whether that is the way to use our resources in preference to other ways," said Lehman shortly before he left Hong Kong. His church was formed last May and became autonomous from the St. Louis-based Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS).

The 6,580-member LC-HKS is also a partner church of the LC-MS.

The Hong Kong proposals put forward to the Canadian delegation are in two major fields. First, the LC-HKS will provide financial support to pastors from Hong Kong who will work among Chinese in Canada at the beginning stage. In about seven years they will be self-supporting, according to the Rev. Allan Yung of LC-HKS.

Secondly, the LC-HKS and the LCC will jointly operate a high school in Canada largely for emigrant students from Hong Kong. Plans are that the LC-HKS may start an international school in Hong Kong which will maintain "close ties" with the proposed school in Canada.

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The LCC is asked to seek a suitable site for the school, to be located either in Vancouver or Toronto, and for the churches in both cities.

It is learned that the LCC does not have Chinese congregations in Toronto. The only Chinese congregation in Vancouver will have to move due to the lack of space for expansion, and its pastor is retiring.

In other mission efforts to Asians, the Canadian church has a new Korean-speaking church which was started about one-and-a-half years ago in Toronto. Now it has some 50 regular members.

Despite the LCC's keen interest in the proposed partnership, Lehman was cautious about the selection of pastors, which will be the responsibility of the Hong Kong church. "We have to be careful that the right pastor is chosen and he will receive proper supervision and support in order to carry out the ministry effectively."

Stanfel said he is aware of the current problems of the Chinese-speaking congregations in Canada. Many of them are seeking bilingual pastors to meet the needs of younger church members who are quick to assimilate into society and prefer English-speaking pastors, he said.

In his opening speech at the seminar, LC-HKS president, the Rev. Benjamin Bun-Wing Chung, said that the invitation to the LCC in the partnership effort will have great impact on the Chinese people in Canada, no matter where they come from, Taiwan, Hong Kong or mainland China. It is also the church's first attempt in seeking an overseas outreach mission with a sister church in its 40-year history, he said.

In detailing the needs for such proposals, Yung said that an increasing number of Lutheran families from the LC-HKS emigrated in the past five years and about 44 percent of the existing clergy left the church in the past 10 years.

He hopes that the overseas mission plan may help the remaining clergy who plan to emigrate to remain in the ministry and at the same time help serve the flocks abroad.

Along the similar line, the Rev. Paul Chan, principal of the church's Lui Cheung-Kwong Secondary School, said there is "a demand for some kind of education of Chinese" for the new migrant families in Canada. "To date, such a type of high school run by the Lutheran church is still lacking," Chan said.

Lehman said the Hong Kong proposals will be further studied carefully by the appropriate districts in his church before concrete plans are made. "In our discussion with the Hong Kong Synod, we did not talk about the timeline at all. It's important that both of us take time to discuss the issues before we make up our minds," he said.

At the same time, the LC-HKS has decided to send a pastor to launch mission work among the growing number of ethnic Chinese in Sydney.

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The new work will mark the first mission cooperation of the LC-HKS and the 111,400-member Lutheran Church in Australia (LCA) in their mission history.

Under the recommendations endorsed last August by the church council, the LCA considered a plan that would involve entering into partnership with the LC-HKS.

There are more than 200,000 Chinese people in Sydney alone, according to a report in the LCA official magazine, *The Lutheran*. And there is a growing Chinese population throughout Australia as a result of a more relaxed immigration policy adopted recently by the Australian government.

The mission cooperation means the Australian church is developing "a closer relationship" with its Asian counterparts, said LCA spokesperson, the Rev. Bob Wiebusch. And it opens a "new dimension" of ministry with the growing number of ethnic Chinese in Sydney and Melbourne.

The initial terms of the Australian-Hong Kong partnership will likely stipulate that the pastor's salary be paid by the Hong-Kong Synod according to the LCA pay scale. Yung said it may cost approximately HK\$450,000 (US\$57,700) for a span of three years which is also the trial period of the proposed cooperation. The LCA will provide a place for worship and parsonage.

However, the Chinese pastor will be responsible through the LCA district to the president of the church, the Rev. Lance Steicke.

In a related development, Yung held talks with Lutheran church officials in the U.S.A. about possible mission work to ethnic Chinese there. To cope with this need, the Hong-Kong Synod set up a mission committee to oversee mission work activities in regard to sending Hong Kong pastors overseas.

Yung said that Lutheran immigrant families from Hong Kong are forced to go to churches of other denominations such as the Presbyterian church for Sunday worship, because there is no Chinese-speaking Lutheran church in Australia.

-- By David Lin --

CCA OBSERVES ASIA SUNDAY ON MAY 7

HONG KONG (alps) -- This year Asia Sunday falls on May 7 with the same theme as last year's: The Mission of God in the Context of the Suffering and Struggling Peoples of Asia, to coincide with the theme of the mission conference to be held in September in Indonesia. The mission conference is organized by the Christian Conference of Asia. Participants of Asia Sunday are asked to use the liturgy and reflect on "Whose neighbor am I?" The liturgy was prepared by the Women's Committee of the National Council of Churches in South Korea.

PHOTO: CHINESE BIBLES PRINTED FOR EASTER



(Source: UBS)

A crowd of Christians gathered at the Community Church in Shanghai looking for a copy of the simplified character edition of the Chinese Bible, the first bound-copy printed by the Amity Press in Nanjing. The Bible was sold for RMB 8.5 (official rate about US\$2.28). About 33,000 copies were printed and delivered for church services last Easter in China. The Amity Press is a joint venture of the China-based Amity Foundation and the United Bible Societies.

#####

JAPANESE CHRISTIANS PROTEST AGAINST REVIVAL OF EMPEROR SYSTEM

TOKYO (alps) -- A crowd of more than 650 people who took to the streets in downtown Tokyo on Jan. 15 to protest against the glorification and revival of emperor system, represented one of the major Christian reactions to the Jan. 7 death of Emperor Hirohito.

The crowd gathered basically to support and respond to an announcement made by the United Church of Christ in Japan's X-Day Center regarding the protest.

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The center announced the public meeting in its twice-monthly newsletter with such purposes as affirming Hirohito's World War II responsibility, declaring the glorification of the Showa Emperor and Showa history as "completely unacceptable," and opposing the use of imperial era names, compulsory mourning and making the emperor's funeral a state event.

The center was set up by the nation's largest Protestant body last March with the purpose of helping its members and other Japanese citizens to "cope with mounting efforts to revive the emperor system and its ideology."

This and other similar organizations formed by other Christian bodies and the eventual network developed among these groups were the result of the national concern over the effects of "X-day," a popular term used now by the Japanese to refer to the day when Hirohito died.

Among the possible effects of "X-day" are the revival of ultra-nationalism and the consideration of the emperor as the divine symbol of Shintoism, which is against the constitutional stipulation of the separation of church and state.

Aside from the demonstration march, a statement was made to the crowd by the Rev. Tomura Masahiro, chairperson of the United Church's Special Committee on the Yasukuni Shrine Issue, and a staff member of the X-day Center.

David Swain, a long-time American missionary of the United Church of Christ in Japan, said that the church has certain resolves that are quite strong, despite threats from right-wing extremist groups which support imperialism, among other things.

He said the Protestant church was one of the first vocal groups which were well prepared for the death of Hirohito. In a statement issued on Jan. 7, The United Church of Christ moderator, Tsuji Nobumichi, urged his members not to "repeat past errors" as the church did during the reign of Hirohito in World War II, and not to compromise in "choosing between Christ and the Emperor as the true Lord." He said Christians should "hold even more firmly to our faith in God and renew our prayers for world peace."

Swain said however, the church is concerned about what is happening on the local community level where some schools called the students in on the first day after the emperor's death, had them bow their heads and read some statements about the death of the emperor. "It will take some time to discover how serious this kind of slow indoctrination will be among the general public," Swain said.

The Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, which has some 20,580 members and is the largest Lutheran body here, said in a statement to the pastors and its congregations that the church and its related educational and social organizations will "not join in any activities and ceremonies related to the death of the emperor and enthronement of the new emperor."

The statement further says that the older generation of the Japanese people "retains special feelings with regard to the emperor,"

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and there is a trend toward "a restoration of the myopic thinking of the past" existing among young people.

The past as described in the statement includes the re-establishment of Shintoism as the state religion and Shintoism's role in the Second World War which caused many Asian nations to suffer from Japan's military actions.

The statement also reinstates the church's present concerns, including government censorship of the contents of Japanese school textbooks regarding the realities of World War II. The statement describes Japan's economic development in Asia as "inordinate."

COOPERATION, PARTNERSHIP KEY FOR WORLD EVANGELIZATION;
LAUSANNE II TO BE HELD IN MANILA IN JULY

SINGAPORE (alps) -- More than 300 Christian leaders from 50 countries gathered here, Jan. 5-8, to attend a global consultation on world evangelization and lay ground work for "the common task of bringing the gospel to all people by the year 2000."

In a "Great Commission Manifesto" adopted unanimously by the participants, the consultation stressed that "cooperation and partnership are absolute necessities" if the common task is to be fulfilled by the year 2000. More than half of the participants came from the Third World.

The manifesto lays ground work for the so-called "AD2000 movement" which will be one of the main topics to be discussed at Lausanne II scheduled to be held in Manila, Jul. 11-20. Some 4,000 Christians are expected to attend.

The manifesto underlines Christian concern for those "who live under the bondage of sin and... victims of poverty and injustice." Focus will be given to "those who have not yet heard the gospel" and a "mission-minded church planting movement" must be established for the unreached group with the aim of making the gospel accessible to all people, the statement says.

A major plan which lists detailed steps for global evangelization was also adopted and will become part of the "ongoing 'toolboxes'" for further implementation by the participants.

The 50-page, 104-point "kaleidoscopic global plan" prepared by a team of 15 missiologists headed by Anglican missionary from Wales, David Barret, proposed the creation of an AD2000 Global Task Force.

The plan contains different suggestions, including setting up an organization to monitor worldwide social, political and religious situations, which will provide Christian information and resources for world evangelization and as well as the translating of key material into six official languages now used at the United Nations.

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freedoms laid down in the two international human rights agreements, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Concerning victims of intolerance and discrimination, the report suggested that persons responsible for protecting the right to practice freedom of religion or belief, such as lawmakers, judges, lawyers and civil servants should have access to the information about the international norms declared in 1981.

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CHURCH PROFILE: HURIA KRISTEN INDONESIA, ITS MISSIONS AND CHALLENGES

By H. Simangunsong

(Simangunsong is general secretary of the 330,000-member Huria Kristen Indonesia. The following abridged article was excerpted from his latest church report.)

PEMATANG SIANTAR, North Sumatra, Indonesia (alps) -- The lay people of Huria Kristen Indonesia or HKI (Indonesian Christian Church) separated themselves from the German Rheinisch Mission (RMG) on May 1, 1927. They were striving for independence in Indonesia. At first the founders of HKI did not support the idea of separation. The most obvious intention at that time was political independence, freedom from Dutch domination.

There were some important reasons which motivated the separation:

- The zeal of nationalism, unity and union for the independence of Indonesia.
- The leaders of HKI strove together for self-sufficiency in the fields of personnel, finance and theology. And it was time for the Batak Church to maintain self-determination both in financial management and leadership development.



H. Simangunsong (ALPS Photo)

After the separation, HKI was subject to bitter opposition and hindrance caused by the ruling power as well as from German missionaries. At the beginning there was no pastor or trained church leader. However, the zeal for independence and the idea of self-determination prevailed.

During the years 1927-1946, the preaching of the gospel was enhanced as long as national freedom was supported. But since 1946, after the independence of Indonesia, at which time the name of the church was changed from Huria Christen Batak (HCB) to Huria Kristen Indonesia (HKI), the proclamation of the gospel was intensified. As a result, the church began to reconsider its organizational structure and the outreach of its mission.

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The church did not have any relationship with its sister churches in Indonesia or abroad for 40 years (1927-1967). It had never received any support in manpower or financial aid. The church had been truly self-supporting in terms of power, resources and theology. However, since 1967 HKI has been recognized as a member of the Council of Churches in Indonesia or the Communion of Churches in Indonesia. Since 1970, it has been a member of the Conference of Churches in Asia, the Lutheran World Federation, World Council of Churches, United Evangelical Mission, Lutheran Church in America and The Lutheran Church of Australia.

The Witness

HKI has its own history in the proclamation of the gospel. This is closely related to the history of HKI, the Indonesian independence fighters and the Church laity. The national patriotism and the self-determination for authority and resource had affected the founders of HKI who decided to separate the church from the German Church. That was why the influence of the laity was very strong on the spreading of the gospel in HKI. Even today, the influence of the laity still exists within HKI in both organizational structure and practical service in congregations. Therefore, it often happens that organizational activity is so dominant that its original purpose to serve the people is neglected.

Yet, the zeal of mission has been very strong within HKI from the very beginning. We courageously spread the gospel among those people who do not know Jesus Christ.

However, this strong zeal is now declining in comparison with the one owned by the former leaders and members of the church, who had supported the church with simple knowledge and limited facility. At that time, there were some factors which favored the preaching of the gospel:

- The spirit of nationalism and the feeling of unity among the congregations were very strong.
- The leaders of HKI strove for freedom (national freedom as well as freedom in the church) from the Dutch colonialism. They were struggling for self-support in power, resources and theology. They intended to maintain indigenization of service and theology.
- The external force from the Dutch government and from the German mission agency forced the congregations to intensify mission activities.

Theological Problems

The first problem is the church members' lack of understanding about mission work which is a joint responsibility, an obligation and a must for all people. For this reason, theological education for church members ought to be taken with serious consideration.

Theological education for elders, Bible women and teachers-preachers, is very important in mission work. Although it should be admitted that theological education can not guarantee anything, but it does help in implementing mission strategy. We know that St. Paul had a good plan and a strategy in his mission work. The spread of the gospel seemed to be developed in one program according to Act. 1:8.

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Therefore, today's church is realistically and intensively reconsidering relationship between witnessing and community service in a new context, and a new form which is more suitable to the challenge and need of human life for the present time.

In line with this plan the HKI is hoping that each congregation may see its responsibility and be prepared to face the challenge of faith in the context of modernization.

Organizational Problems

In order to be able to improve the mission work of HKI, it is felt necessary to maintain a practical organization. It is time for HKI to extend its mission work into a more profitable outreach. Before this is done, the church has to improve its organization structure as well as to start preparing skilled mission workers who are dedicated to mission work....

It is necessary to train a number of skilled evangelists and volunteers while promoting the vision of church members in each congregation to understand that the witness of the gospel is one of the church's responsibilities. A living church is a community which continues to witness together and to serve. It is a common practice that in planning the annual budget of the congregation, the witness of the gospel is often neglected. Moreover, local church concentrates its activity on the construction of church buildings and on other physical development of the church, rather than on the strengthening of the faith in Jesus Christ. It is necessary to develop an acceptable mission plan which sets out who are to be responsible, who are to be sent and how to maintain the organization.

Mission and Church Aid

The meanings of mission and witnessing are often misunderstood. Mission and witnessing are often identified as some kind of help so much so that what is most important in witnessing is not the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ or salvation in Jesus Christ. People tend to think of mission and witnessing as some kind of financial and material help.

As such, people should have a clear understanding of mission work which is the proclamation of the gospel and to what extent mission work is supported by money.... There should be a clear difference between the work of witnessing and church aid. Witnessing is above all, proclaiming the Good News to the world, via evangelization, education and extension, preaching, etc.

Performance

In general, witnessing is still restricted among members of HKI, those who have been migrating to other provinces, towns and cities and those who are still living in the Batak lands.

HKI thinks that it is necessary for the church to strengthen their belief and faith, so that they do not go away from church life, and if possible, use them as pioneers to establish a new congregation in their locations. Besides, HKI has also taken part in external evangelization among those who stick to "Parmalim," the original Batak religion in Parsoburan and other places.

Recently, HKI has started a face-to-face evangelism program. The outreach target are those people who have not yet received Christ as

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Lord and Savior. It is a way of winning people to Christ, not at home, not in group, but in public places, individually. This system is practiced in countries where people are prohibited from winning people adhering to any formally acknowledged religions.

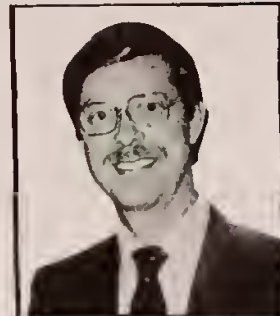
Frankly, it is an operation which is difficult to run because we have to encounter the prohibition of accepting new belief or religion. Moreover, we have to, first of all, develop a friendly relationship. It is also necessary to know the people's backgrounds in advance, in order to avoid things that may hurt their feelings and to find out things or topics that may be used as a starting point for discussion. For this reason, it is necessary to improve the evangelist's knowledge and skill so that they will be able to select relevant ways and methods in witnessing....

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FEATURE: MISSIONARY SON TO LINK NORTH AMERICAN CHRISTIANS IN
EDUCATION AID IN ASIA

HONG KONG (alps) -- After 14 years of missionary work in education in Asia, Dr. David W. Vikner, 43, returned to his native country, the United States, two years ago. He brought with him a new commitment, which is intimately linked to the vast continent of Asia. In his new office in New York, he, as vice-president, directs the China and personnel exchange program for the interdenominational United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia.

Last week Vikner returned to Asia on a business trip. Packed in his suitcase was a new appointment which he said was a surprise to him. He was elected president of the United Board and will officially take on the new task July 1 to succeed Dr. Paul T. Lauby, who retires after 20 years with the Asia-oriented educational fund-raising agency.



David Vikner

"I did not aspire to be president of the organization. I joined the board because I was just interested in its China program," recalled Vikner, who was born in a missionary family in China and is an ordained pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

Vikner spent his early years in China, Taiwan, Japan and Hong Kong, teaching English at such highly esteemed institutions as National Taiwan University and Central China Normal University in Wuhan.

For some years, he was principal of Lutheran Middle School in Hong Kong and was China consultant for the Lutheran World Federation. Academically, he earned his doctorate degree in Comparative Education from Columbia University Teachers' College and his theological degree from Yale Divinity School. Yet, he said this promotion means he still has a lot to learn.

"I approach this position with a great deal of humility," he said, pointing out that his responsibility is being expanded from China to other pluralistic Asian countries and entails increased involvement in fund-raising.

Many retired and older Lutheran pastors in Hong Kong and Taiwan will remember Vikner as the son of missionary parents who lived in Henan

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Province, China in the turbulent early 20th century. The history of the United Board may as well be as long, and interesting, as Vikner's own missionary family history which originated and is deeply rooted in China.

Started in 1922 to primarily help Chinese Christian colleges to coordinate work and raise funds in North America, the United Board tied its name to 13 Protestant schools in China. Among these schools were the famous Yenjing University in Beijing, Jinling University in Nanjing and Lingnan University in Guangzhou. These schools later became the comfortable seedbeds for nurturing prominent Chinese figures who played significant roles in the fields of academia, literature and politics in those revolutionary years of the early and middle 20th century in China.

Before the trustees adopted the present name United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, they would not have imagined that they could go back to work in China again. Nor could they have known that the universities they are now supporting would no longer be Christian, as they were before 1949; they are now merely government schools.

After almost three decades of virtually broken ties, the United Board regained its foothold in China soon after the People's Republic of China and the United States rebuilt official diplomatic ties. The United Board obtained a compensation of US\$11 million from the Chinese government to cover the loss which was triggered by the forced discontinuation of the work of the board in 1949 when the Communists gained control in China.

Since 1980, Vikner said, the board has returned to work in China, using the compensation. About 350 Chinese scholars have gone overseas to study under the sponsorship of the board, more than 150 western scholars have taught in China, and two large libraries in Szechuan University in Chengdu and Shanxi Normal University in Xian, have received US\$1.3 million kick-off money to set up their shelves and purchase books. About one-third of the annual program budget is now used in China. Vikner said over US\$4 million have already been used in educational projects in 86 different universities in China alone over the past eight years.

Vikner foresees a slight change of the board's program in China in the coming years. "Instead of helping university faculty members to study overseas for graduate degrees, I hope more people will receive training in graduate programs in China. As there are more MA programs in China now, we're concentrating on more visiting scholars to go to North America for one-year auditing courses, doing research in libraries and so on."

This emphasis on helping develop university faculty is targeted at older staff members, Vikner said, who are in their mid 30's. "The board encourages younger (20's) scholars to get an MA and some experience in China before going overseas. We won't help people in their 60's. We feel it is important to help people of middle ages."

Vikner observed that as the Chinese government has invested an enormous amount of money in supporting science scholars to study overseas, the United Board could fill the gap by concentrating on various disciplines in humanities and social sciences. This is "rather broadly appreciated by the Chinese government."

In this trip to Beijing, Vikner will meet with officials from the State Education Commission. They will negotiate on a new project - an English Language Center in a major Chinese university which will train Chinese teachers of English and westerners to teach English as a second language. Part of the center will be used for research/study and audio-visual purposes. The center may, if approved, offer degree

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programs and will be staffed by faculty members from cooperating higher education institutions in both North America and England.

New interest in education in China has prompted Vikner to investigate the possibility of providing assistance in opening study centers on some long-neglected subjects such as Mongolian Studies, Korean Studies and the study of Dunghuang in the western frontier Kansu Province, where remains of stone-carved Buddhas remain largely mysterious and interesting.

Vikner said that an overall switch of geographical emphasis of the board's general program is necessary in the coming years. One of them is the de-emphasis on east Asia. As countries like South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong are getting prosperous and can rely on their own resources, an emphasis on South and Southeast Asia is necessary. India, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines have greater needs these days, Vikner explained.

However, he said individual projects will continue and the board has "strong feelings that we have to get involved in planting seed money, to get the kind of creative, 'cutting-edge' projects going."

Outside of China, the board related to some 50 Christian colleges in Asia, including Chung Chi College of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Women's Christian College in Madras, India, Christian University of Timor, Indonesia, Sophia University in Tokyo, Yonsei University in Seoul, Tunghai University in Taipei and Payap University in Chiangmai, Thailand.

The changing economic and political situations in the various Asian countries has caught the attention of the president-elect. Vikner said the board will continue to focus on the Christian outreach programs. "We can work with universities to try to deal with the challenges the countries are facing at this point and time." He especially pointed out the important need for more Asian women to become educated.

In addition to attending the annual meeting with six Asian trustees, Vikner will meet all 33 trustees twice a year, reviewing policies and relationships with more than 80 academic institutions in nine Asian countries. He also directs all projects with nearly US\$4 million in expenditures. The board's income, he said, come primarily from individual, corporate and church donors.

Member denominations such as Baptist, Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian in USA and Canada, Reformed, United, and Methodist, have a keen interest in the board. As such, a close monitoring of the funds to be used in projects is crucial in his job. However, problems always arise when some churches assume the fund should be used by the church, while it should be used solely by the academic institution.

Vikner cited the example that as the church in China does not involve itself in higher education (the government does), funding support has to go through the government. But some financial assistance could be channelled through a Christian initiated agency like the Amity Foundation, he said.

Aside from this clear sense of stewardship, one significant role Vikner will definitely play is to encourage North American Christians, and perhaps Christians in the prosperous East Asian nations, to take part in contributing to higher education in Asia. Nothing is more clear than an appeal printed at the back of the board's annual report which concisely states the purpose: The board "links North Americans and Asians in a partnership to prepare the leaders of Asia for the next century."

-- By David Lin --

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